

A REFLECTION ON HAITIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN: LOSING THEIR
VOICES AND RECAPTURING THEIR MEMORIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Just as I have clearly observed the social and cultural isolation among the Haitian immigrant women coming from Haiti, I have also noted the segregation between the newly arrived Haitian immigrant women and the longer settled Haitian women from the *diaspora* based solely on social class—despite sharing a common origin story. With growing concern in the community, the newly arrived Haitian immigrant women are unable to access important information because of language barriers, the lack of a voice in the community, and the feelings of being outcasts because of lack of communal strength, love and church harmony.

This model project will attempt to work with Haitian immigrant women newly arrived in America to help them regain their voice; while at the same time helping the long-settled, professional Haitian immigrant women recapture their memories. This attempt will look at the notion of “otherness,” how meaning is made and mediated, and how life-changing is nurtured and sustained.

Sitting together at the table of love five newly-arrived Haitian immigrant women and five Haitian immigrant women from the diaspora will be in conversation, using a variety of approaches: teaching, focus groups, Bible engagement, prayer, storytelling, documentary films, testimonial stories, pertinent information and sharing a meal together.

To My Mother Leonne Renazile whose upbringing, nurturing love and prayers never cease to amaze me, and continue helping me grow to become an accepted member of the community. Also sending a warm shout of thanks to My Husband Evrard Herard, whose encouragement and emotional support during difficult times, always aided me to continue developing and bringing meaning to my world.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

God himself as a prophetic church established the church community, and when the Lord Jesus Christ entered the Synagogue in Nazareth, stood up and read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah that was given to him (Lk 4:16-19).¹ “He found the place where it was written and said: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the Poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’” Jesus was claiming that he is the head of his church, and he is the center of the mission (which is part of the Messianic secret), the Messiah who came to the world, to bring good news to the poor, to set captives free, to let the oppressed go free and give justice for all. Consequently, the early Christians based the Church on Acts 2:42 by devoting themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers. This is a big part of the community of love and justice for all. According to the “Theology of Mission,” Jesus who is the center of mission in the Church left three marks for the early Church: 1) the *kerygma* (teaching), 2) the *koinonia* (fellowship), and 3) *diakonia* (service and humility) and these are the pillars upon which the church is built.² Therefore, any Christian organizational system should be based on God first; then the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical text will be from New International Version (NIV).

² Peter Heltzel, “Prophetic Church” (handout, October 29, 2009).

poor, the suffering, the destitute, the outcast, the foreigners and the immigrants. The church should strive to strengthen the community and to empower the congregants through leadership development skills, training programs and to help them develop their natural abilities, talents and resources.

“The beloved City was in ruins, its gates burned down, and its walls destroyed. Without walls the city had no security, no protection from the enemies. Nehemiah asked what was in his heart. ‘How are my people? How are the Jews?’”³

Nehemiah, who had a calling in his life, was ready through prayers and personal experience as he prepared himself to understand his destiny and the mind of God. He knew that he had to face many challenges as he asked himself, “Who is God? He is the God of Heaven. Who are we? We are the servants of God. What is the Crisis at hand? The City gates are in ruins.”⁴

The Problem

Bethel Christian Church is a home-based church fairly new in the community located in Brooklyn, NY, approximately one and half miles away from Flatbush Avenue. The neighborhood is multicultural and about one fourth of the community is Haitian immigrants settled in the vicinity. They encompass a wide range of different social and economic backgrounds.

Bethel Christian Church has a low membership and deals with a high level of poverty among the majority of its members because of the lack of jobs and lack of a support network in the community. Many Haitian immigrants who just arrived in the

³ Mack Pier and Katie Sweeting, *The Power of A City at Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 107.

⁴ Ibid.

country moved in with family members, friends or a friend of friends. Moreover, it will take months before one of the immigrants can secure a job under the table because of lack of proper documentation and the language barrier. As ministers we feel obligated to help the members of the church to find a solution, despite the immigrants' pessimism as they experience a deep sense of fear because apparently they cannot see a solution to their problems in the near future. However, the ministers of the church have taken notice of the problem and want to be part of a solution. Fear has a way of incapacitating the human heart and creating hopelessness and helplessness. As Howard Thurman comments on fear: "When the basis of such fear is analyzed, it is clear that it arises out of the sense of isolation and helplessness in the face of the varied dimensions of violence to which the underprivileged are exposed."⁵ The task is multifaceted: cultural, social, spiritual and economic. Therefore, I desire to see a positive change in the form of a paradigm shift, where the disinherited will be empowered.

The pastor of Bethel Christian Church was born in Haiti and as a conscientious Christian he wants to help the community, feed them with spiritual food and help them to be "*de bloke*"—delivered—from all spiritual hindrances. Looking further at the struggle of the church, I see a community in disarray followed by a range of problems the immigrants suffer daily, such as a social clash, lack of support, language barrier, and lack of cooperation in the community. Such struggles propelled me to take interest in the immigrants' plight and tried to do something positive for the Haitian community. In turn, it will be a positive helping hand for some of the Haitian immigrants. Further, my interest will focus on helping to provide mentoring, teaching and empowering techniques and

⁵ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and The Disinherited* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1949), 37.

much praying to the immigrants in order to guide and to comfort those in need. My challenge is to focus on the Haitian adult women, who lost their voices, their stories and inspiration; and who have suffered with cultural disassociation, deprivation and oppression by society and circumstances of life.

Having migrated to America, the immigrant women (most of whom do not have legal status in the country), become an immediate statistic. They become invisible to the mainstream with no identification, no friends, no family and no support system; these women are stuck with nowhere to go, unable to comprehend the mainstream language, to find a job and to become a good provider for their young. For Haitian women, their homes are culturally structured in ways to provide and to nurture their family with values, love and a safe sanctuary.

These challenges that the new immigrant Haitian women are facing clearly awake my soul and gave me an incentive to follow up with Pastor Herold, the pastor of Bethel Christian Church and to have several exchanges on the topic. During the course of our few meetings, we identified the immigrant issues and concerns. Together, we talked about a proposed intervention for the community, although, I picked up a lack of zeal from the pastor's behavior because of other issues he is confronting about the church. Nevertheless, I kept my mind focused on the issue at hand, and reminded myself of a particular verse quoted directly from the bible: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength" and "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (my emphasis) (Mark 12:3). Once the neighbor is defined, then one's moral obligation is clear.⁶ For me, such a passage becomes the epitome of my zeal. Identifying

⁶ Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 89.

with my neighbors and their needs, their pain from losing their songs, aspirations and hope because of being invisible in a strange environment, where they found no one to hold their hands, therefore my mission is very clear.

Suddenly, I heard the voice of my destiny calling me, telling me “this is the way, walk in it.” Undoubtedly, at this stage the absorbing challenges of the Haitian immigrant women’s plight in front of me, consumes all other attention or focus in my life and their lack of hope takes precedence over everything else. I see myself plunging headlong in this project with the help of the Holy Spirit as my guide and counselor.

Author Sunday I. Etsekhume quoted from the book *Inspiration to Heaven* a “vision is not a normal sight, it is supernatural, prophetic and it is the ability to see beyond one’s imagination; seeing things ahead of time and to actualize it with the help of God”⁷

The Location

Bethel Christian church was chosen to be the sight to accomplish such a great mission. At first I was a bit skeptical because of the location of the church, since it is located in a private neighborhood; I thought the church was completely isolated. However, circling two miles around the church, North, South, East and West, I realized the richness of that neighborhood and the multi-cultural functions and activities that are actually taken place there. This revelation opened for me a world of opportunity and for the immigrant to be connected with others.

The church is located at 885 East 34th Street, Brooklyn NY, 11210. The neighborhood is a combination of religious groups: Evangelical Protestant

⁷ Sunday I. Etsekhume, *Inspiration to Heaven: The Way to a Successful Journey* (Bronx, New York: Kola House of Printing, 2005), 43.

denominations, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus. According to the 2010 Census the neighborhood has an average income per household of \$42,967. The population is made up of 21,252 whites; 36,865 blacks, of which 16,028 are Haitian; 4,929 Hispanics; 2,575 Asians. The male population count is 28,616 with a median age of 31.50 years; female population count is 33,992 and median age is 36.20 years; the median age for the population is 34.10 years.⁸

The social composition of the neighborhood is multicultural; they are from different islands, African and European and multi-faith. According to the center of immigration studies, the last Census Bureau data (2008) indicates there are 546,000 foreign-born Haitians in the United States; that is up from 408,000 in 2000 and 218,000 in 1990. They believe that their best estimation is that there are 75,000 to 125,000 illegal Haitians immigrants in the country. In 2000 the INS estimated there were 76,000 illegal Haitian immigrants.⁹ Haitian immigrants and their young children under 18 years living in poverty is 20% compared to native born and their young children at 11.6%¹⁰.

After placing and gathering all the data, I have decided to have other meetings with the church administration for the sole purpose of creating an atmosphere of urgency regarding the problem and how we can move forward. We spoke about different avenues to get to that goal without neglecting to bring prayers to the forefront. One of my concerns was to look for the proper site team members not necessarily from the church, but Spirit-filled Christians, also sensitive to the cause. A good book that was referred to

⁸ US Census Bureau, QuickFacts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36047.html> (accessed February 11, 2013).

⁹ Steven A. Camarota, "Facts Sheet on Haitian Immigrants in the United States," <http://www.cis.org/immigrantsState%20Residency> (accessed August 21, 2013).

¹⁰ Ibid.

me about the quality one needs to have in order to help in the ministry speaks volume for this task. The name of the book is *Church Usher, Servant of God: Proven Methods for Effective Ushering*. I believe that anything we do for Christ must be effective. Therefore, I see effective Ministry, and with the help of God, I will put the methodology to the test.

The Situation

In the view of Rev. Stanley J. Lemon those who help in the ministry of the Church should have certain qualities and the primary requisites for a good church such as friendliness, vision, humility, calmness, flexibility, reverence, kindness, submissiveness, graciousness, neatness, sensitive, poise, dependability, and dedication. These qualities may be cultivated by encouragement from pastors and staff through feedback, prayers and love.¹¹

The staff and I talked about those qualities for an effective ministry on how it would probably be challenging to find site team members with those qualities and specifically the willingness to start and finish the project regardless their own daily challenges. Further, the Pastor was talking about his own economic problems and the stress at the end of the month when it is time to pay the mortgage. He passionately explained the positive and the negative side of having a home-based Church. While on the one hand, it appeared to be more economical and less stressful; but at the end of the month however, the monthly bills are there and he has incurred a huge electrical bill every month because he has a broadcasting radio in the house. The members expect him to be available twenty-four/seven since the church is a home-based and the expectation from the members is Pastor should always be home for them.

¹¹ David R. Enlow, *Church Usher: Servant of God: Proven Methods for Effective Ushering* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 2003), 45.

Nevertheless, we commenced the search for team members with a revival meeting for about three days, and the theme for the revival was about a “Life Changing Opportunity” for all. The biblical engagement verse was in (Ex 3:7-8) God says: “I have seen the affliction of my people, I have heard their cry and I have come down to deliver them, so therefore, let us go to Bethel and cross to the other side to meet with our maker, our healer, and our deliverer.”

The administration and I believed the vision for the immigrant Haitian women with God’s help who strengthens us can be accomplished, for we are called to help the needy and to bring justice to the defenseless through prayer and action.

Bethel Christian Church is an interdenominational nonprofit organization affiliated with Disciples of Christ which is an international missionary group involved in planting churches. In our dialogue, we talked about ministry and how the ministers need to focus on the ministry of teaching, preaching, helping and reaching others for Jesus Christ through love as he taught us. After the revival, I felt a sense of sadness and urgency for the Haitian immigrant women community. I know there will be much work to be done by addressing the problem through the eyes of social, cultural and biblical research in order to create a working model for the needy. As Rev. Dr. Neil Mosser said “One of the ways to understand preaching is that at the homiletically moment one human being offers words publicly that offers shapes to another person’s human’s experience. In other words good preaching offers a slant on life in a spoken form.”¹²

¹² David Neil Mosser, “When the Word of the Gospel is Heard,” *The Living Pulpit* 16, no.4 (October- December 2007): 18.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHALLENGE

A Woman Named Marie: An upper middle class Haitian woman, whose name is Marie, lives with her husband and two young girls in Haiti. Marie is a physician, who established her own business in Haiti for decades. She is financially secure and well known in Haiti for her medical skills. Her medical office is also well known in the Haitian community. She is well respected because of her dedication to her work and her love for her community.

Marie was not a stranger to New York City as she traveled often to the U.S., usually to purchase top of the line office furniture in order to provide the best care possible for her clients in the affluent neighborhood where she practices.

Unfortunately, Mary suffered a terrible divorce with her spouse of twenty years, and immediately following her divorce her social status went downhill. And according to her story, she felt that her only remedy to get back on her feet was to leave Haiti and to come to live in the U.S. Although Marie followed her dream to come live in the U.S., she could not secure a place of her own for herself and her two daughters. Marie left her two daughters with an acquaintance living in upstate N.Y., temporarily until she was able to find her own place. Marie has a brother who lives in a different state; apparently they are estranged from each other and are not able to come together to resolve the crisis. Marie went on living with a friend in Connecticut while her daughters stayed somewhere in upstate N.Y. with acquaintances.

Marie became completely disconnected from her social class and activities, and felt completely lost in the system here in the U.S. because of lack of communal concern. She felt culturally, socially, spiritually and economically destabilized. She felt that she must learn a different sets of behavioral symbols that will reinforce her sense of community and lessen her sense of cultural disassociation—as she has lost her sense of values, her identity and courage to fight. With not many resources in place and no togetherness in her community, Marie felt a sense of helplessness and hopelessness as an immigrant woman.

Marie felt like she underwent “operant conditioning” because of all the changes that occurred in her learned behavior such as the loss of hope, her values and her positive view in the social system.¹³ Marie lost her inspiration, her pride in her work and she needs to reclaim her voices and her narrative story.

My informant goes on to say that Marie secured a job as a home attendant somewhere until she is able to understand English better before making any attempt to take the medical license board.

This story is only one example of the Haitian immigrant women’s plight living in America without a basic support network and with a language barrier. Marie’s story is typical of many young adult Haitian women struggling socially, and how despicable their poor living arrangements are in a strange land trying to make ends meet.

A failed community, a failed network system with no ability to negotiate, Marie felt abandoned and left all alone to fend for herself and her two daughters. Marie needs new “symbolic behavior such as a social approval technique so she can do something

¹³ Peter Kivisto, *Social Theory: Roots and Branches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 274.

valuable for herself by reclaiming her narrative story.”¹⁴ Marie’s story epitomizes the pivotal importance of the challenges facing the adult Haitian immigrant women living in a foreign land. And because of such disparity, I plan to address the challenges facing these women.

The challenges will be addressed through different means, such as: storytelling, multimedia presentation, bringing Haitian immigrant women from the diaspora together with the just-arrived Haitian immigrant women to form a bond of patriotic devotion, and promoting nationalistic, cultural, social and spiritual interests. The former will help the latter to have a voice, helping them to reflect on their present circumstances, teach them awareness about their values and their life experiences. The just-arrived Haitian women will also learn about empowerment techniques, good biblical stories to shape their positive views about themselves and leadership skills to improve their search towards financial resources. And last but not least this endeavor will help the Haitian women from the diaspora to remember their narrative story. Such challenges will need an organizational model to help the practitioner in this endeavor.

In view of the preceding idea, I am examining Harrison’s “open systems models” which is an organizational model that help the practitioner diagnose problems effectively, to help gather data, prepare feedback and decide what steps will help the client solve problems and enhance effectiveness.¹⁵

Therefore, I will attempt to comprehend several key features of the model in question for diagnosis, planning, action and evaluation, as I will use the site of Bethel

¹⁴ Ibid., 275.

¹⁵ Michael I. Harrison, *Diagnosing Organizations: Methods, Models, and Processes* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 28.

Christian Church as a dynamic center for growth, learning, innovation and inception of empowerment. Bethel Church is very much part of the process since the ethos of the church is to identify with the social and cultural clash the immigrant is facing now.

These women are called to remember their narrative stories, to have a voice and to understand their present circumstances for a better tomorrow. The conceivability of such an idea will propel me to explore the beliefs and values the Haitian women hold collectively through rituals, riddles, symbols, folk songs, traditional stories and mutual practices in order to identify new behavioral techniques. The team and I will build a model to bring awareness about the challenges facing the Haitian immigrant women in the community, and also try to address other questions such as cultural disassociation, social dislocation, powerlessness, and helplessness.

The primary plan is to hope these women become empowered through awareness, teaching techniques, conferences, preaching, and reflection by reclaiming their voices and remembering their narrative stories. Secondly, is to help them access important information and to be accountable to new learning behavior.

The women's voices will be heard, as the team hopes they will inspire themselves and others to understand their present circumstances and to be empowered with hope as they are connected with their professional counterparts in the diaspora. One of the goals of this project is to bring these women out of isolation and loneliness, and to bring them forward in their own community through empowerment techniques by giving them hope.

According to the National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights, "Immigrant women are more than ever, the gateway to improve their own lives and the lives of their families." Moreover, the immigrant women make many contributions and positive

impacts on their communities.¹⁶ Therefore, empowering the immigrant women through teaching will help them appreciate their own values, cultural heritage, and accept their own stories.

Changes are made in incremental steps. I propose to alleviate powerlessness and helplessness by modifying the outcome with strength, hope, access to information, and behavioral modification as those women developed the bond of love with one another—*“my sister’s keeper” shibboleth, to create a new story.*

I propose to work with the immigrant Haitian women in a support model program for six months, hoping the immigrant women’s group becomes aware of their values, identifying with their experiences, and addressing their trust issues, as the team and I will try to create a trustworthy atmosphere with mutual respect and accountability to everyone. Moreover, the team and I will help the Haitian immigrant women to willingly accept their narrative story as they are considering it, remembering it and reclaiming their voices. I will also focus on teaching about faith and prayer, as we will engage the Bible and allow it to give meaning to the immigrant women’s circumstances which are an important part for this project.

In view of working on this project, I have foreseen a potential conflict, which is the conflict of time. Coordinating everyone’s time together for the future meetings and group conferences could be potentially problematic and tedious. Another problem and conflict I foreseen, is to reach the community in need by flyers, word of mouth and willingness to be part of the group; to find committed professional Haitian women in the diaspora who truly want to help the new immigrant to take on the task of teaching,

¹⁶ The National Coalition for Immigrant Women’s Rights, www.wordpress.com/media-center/quick-facts-women-immigration/ (accessed September 20, 2013).

helping and meeting faithfully with the new immigrant women in need, weekly for six months; and to help the women trust again by accepting the testimonial sessions and to be part of the “*My sister keeper*” *shibboleth new story* and to give back to the “Movement” my community needs.

The team members and I will also be part of the answer for the project. Each member will be assigned an immigrant woman in need and be part of the empowerment process. Every new endeavor has the ability to create at first a systemic imbalance; the same way every change at first creates resistance on all who are part of the changing process. However, I believe the good seed will prevail with prayer; good planning and teaching and “one joint action with a common goal”

CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL DISASSOCIATION

In the anthropological sense of culture, which is a much broader sense, everyone is cultured through whatever traditions, beliefs, customs and creative activities¹⁷ and the Haitian people are no different from everyone else. Although Haiti's plight is a staggering situation, author J. Michael Dash stated,

Statistics can hardly convey the dimension of human suffering that exists in Haiti. Some of the most dramatic examples of his human wretchedness are visible in the capital, Port-au-Prince, where thousands of children still die from measles and diarrhea. To concentrate excessively on this reality is to miss a key element in Haitian Culture. There is something that is still ruggedly defiant about this rural, agrarian, and unindustrialized culture. However this ruggedness is also apparent in the art of their imagination, they are resourceful, creative, dynamic, prolific and inexplicable.¹⁸

The Haitian plight and suffering is far beyond cognitive discernment. Their imagination and creativity not only advanced in art, popular music, films, and a new look on folkloric images and spiritual height, but also as have a greater sense of nationalist brotherhood, cultural roots and more frequently shared knowledge through social intercourse and political ambivalence.

I was born in Port-Au-Prince Haiti in the late 1950's, living with my parents and four siblings, my older sister and three brothers. I was the third oldest child and for as long that I could remember, my mother was always the strength, the pillar and the final

¹⁷ J. Michael Dash, *Culture and Customs of Haiti* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), Foreword.

¹⁸ Ibid, xii.

authority in the house. My mother, a caring woman, who was also a good provider for her children including my daddy, is one of the ideal Haitian women socially and culturally. She is a devoted woman for her family primarily, loves the Lord, and always remains in prayer for her nuclear, extended family and her spiritual community. She worked as a seamstress to make ends meet, in order to contribute to her home's financial security. However, because of her authoritarian approach dealing with her family most of the time, she was looked upon as an overbearing and domineering woman. This character trait even appeared to be very insensitive to her family and some of her friends most of the time. For me personally, I always felt that her approach made me grim in my heart and soul. Consequently, it left me feeling melancholic and disconnected emotionally and despondently empty.

I was raised in a Christian home. Yet, Jesus was not my personal savior because my focus was solely on myself searching for a way to remove the tarnished stain from an overbearing mother that was overwhelming my soul. I was a rebellious teenager who wanted to do my own thing and live my own life the way it seemed right to me. I felt cheated and unloved primarily by my mother. Nevertheless, God somehow had a plan for my life.

I migrated to the United States of America with my mother who was thirty-nine years of age at that time and my two younger brothers in the mid 1970's. My father died suddenly while in Haiti one-year prior to migrating to the US. I was in my early teen-age years, when my brothers and mother were invited to stay with my mother's mother (grand' ma) in Brooklyn NY.

As a young Haitian immigrant woman, my Mom, coming to live in America, unable to speak the language and not having a voice, I started to realize that “Power had just changed hands.” My sovereign mother, the vibrant domineering, overbearing woman, who was always the queen in her castle giving order to her subjects, became in one day, subject-less. She lost her castle, her power and her subjects because she was not able to navigate the new rules in the new land; she could not speak the language; and she became the subaltern instead of the authority. She was the lower rank, the inferior rank, and the secondary rank of status. My mother needed help. “My Mother lost her powerful voice.”

I resented my mother for her overbearing role and lack of sensitivity to my emotional frailty as a child while I was living with her in Haiti, even though she is a very conscientious and lovable mother who will do anything to satisfy her young ones. Hence, seeing her so weak and out of her element crushed my soul. In the early 1990’s, the Spirit of God set me up through different trials and tribulations, until I resubmitted and rededicated my life to God. Right after my submission to the will of God, his Spirit took me to the circle of vision as he panoramically showed me a portion of his special plan for my life. I always have had a very sensitive spot in my heart for women’s plight as I always feel compelled to help, listen to them, and try to bring a solution to their situations. Could it be my reaction towards my Mother was pre-determined by my own insecurity and insatiable need to belong, causing me to feel underestimated and so lonely as a child, that I felt no one cares about me, and no one listens to me? Such questions probably would never come with an answer for me. Or could it be the way I think I felt was a symptom of a deeper need placed inside of my heart by the mighty God, so his work of compassion could continue through those he ordained? I do not have the answer.

However, once I welcomed the Holy Spirit in my life, I knew right from the start that one of my spiritual gifts was a word of knowledge and a word of wisdom.

I witnessed many women being blessed and changed through the work of the Holy Spirit in my life at an early age. The more I obeyed God, the clearer my ministry became. As I am walking in my spiritual journey I can see a small cloud of the starting point of God's glory in my life. Those who know me started to call me "Spiritual Mother"—I am the mother of many Christian women. As I realized that God continued to place women in my path who were going through difficulties, suffering and all kinds of issues, and who needed caring, praying, empathizing, mentoring and loving. I found myself praying and mentoring these women from all sorts of situations, especially Haitian women since they feel more comfortable with those who speak their own language.

In 2011, I went on to help a fairly new small-planted Haitian church in the community. The Church is Bethel Christian Church, the new pastor's name is Pastor Herold who has a vision to *de Bloke*, to help deliver, some of the Haitians in need from spiritual hindrances and lack of support from the community through spiritual food and communal networking. After entertaining some interesting notions with the pastor about the compounding needs and problems of Haitians who are living in the U.S., I knew in my heart, God was about to do something wonderful, although I had no epiphany or manifestation yet.

I saw an opportunity shining through the clouds as a bright light of hope to explore the suffering and the plight of these immigrant women through the interpretative approach of methodology. The new Haitian immigrant will have the opportunity to

reclaim their voices and the Haitian women professionals from the diaspora will remember their immigrant experiences. A model will be created and all-out effort to establish meaning to both new immigrant Haitian women and professional Haitian women from the diaspora.

I began this journey working on a model project with four site team members to complete my thesis for my Doctorate of Ministry degree.

The Haitian Immigrant Women have suffered with cultural disassociation and many family challenges because of their living conditions. The Haitians are used to a very close family life, social life, and religious life as well as neighborhood life in Haiti.

According to Guerda Nicolas, Angela DeSilva and Stephanie Donnelly,

The importance of neighborhood life can be understood by researchers define sense of community, and they define the sense of community as a feeling that members 'need will be met through their commitment to be together.'¹⁹

Haitians for the most part suffered a violent split from their country when they migrated to the US. Such emotional intensity on leaving their country so abruptly knocks down their psychological well-being and left them empty from the intimacy of their family, neighborhood, and their religious belief community in the U.S.

One author highlighted it this way: "When individuals engaged with their neighbors, they develop a sense of community. It is this sense of community that has been shown to contribute to health and well-being particularly mental health."²⁰

Therefore, this lack of communal support ripped the immigrant with their roots and left them empty, as they are not able to pick themselves back up again to become a

¹⁹ Guerda Nicolas, Angela DeSilva and Stephanie Donnelly, *Social Networks and the Mental Health of Haitian Immigrants* (Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2011), 73.

²⁰ Ibid., 133.

productive citizen. Thus, for the most part they become hopeless and helpless. They lost their *joie de vivre*, their riddles, and their rituals in a strange land with a different climate and a different language. The Haitian immigrant women have lost their identity and their folk songs as they became disassociated culturally; they lost their autonomy and authority as a group.

Such severe cultural disassociations influence these women's sense of belonging in their home culture. In this situation, my goal is to propose first of all, to build awareness in these immigrant women in order to help them realize their values and the importance of their personal experiences through different strategies. Secondly, I also propose to help them appreciate their cultural heritage through Bible stories. And thirdly, help them acquire skills and techniques that will promote strength and support through their own storytelling.

I met with my team members and my advisor numerous times during the months of January and February of 2013. After, my team members and I decided to work on building a model project through qualitative method of observations and interviews such as compiling data on

Fieldwork descriptions of activities, behaviors, conversations, interpersonal interactions, community processes, human experiences, field notes data, including context within the observations were made and detailed descriptions and quotations about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge about their situations.²¹

The model project was scheduled to start in the month of March 2013. The project is built in three phases: the first phase, the *Orientation Phase* which is the *Socialization Phase* lasting from March 2, 2013 to May 4, 2013; the second, the *Intermediate Phase*,

²¹ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 4.

which is the *Cultural Phase* running from May 17, 2013 to July 19, 2013; and the last phase, the *Final Phase*, which is the *Biblical Phase* would run from in July 27, 2013 to September 28, 2013. And because of our schedule differences, time availability from the women in the diaspora and the new immigrant women and the accessibility of the site because of church activities, we decided to meet only on Saturdays.

On March 2, 2013 at 3PM the site team members gathered together behind closed doors to brainstorm about different ideas to share in the next meeting. We gathered at Bethel Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) located at 885 East 34th Street in Brooklyn NY. Team coordinator Rev. Ghislaine Herard, Team Members: Margarette Tropnas, Myrtha Herold, Margarette Noel. The absentees were Pastor Herold and Rachel Charles. Evangelist Myrta Herold and Margarette Noel prepared the minutes.

The meeting started with an opening prayer by Margarette Noel and the plan overview was to recruit participants for the project and have an execution plan. I started to provide the details for the project and queries for the team members as I provided clarification about the research questions. I discussed the possible number of participants a total of ten (10) women, divided into two groups. Five of them will be the voice of the less fortunate ones, who just started their struggles in the new land (the New Immigrants), and the remaining five will be the voice of those who have already experienced their struggles, have a profession, speak the language and forgot about their humble beginnings (the Diaspora). The candidates for this mission need to be struggling for identity, lost in the new system, and with limited qualifications.

I also confirmed with the team that the location designated for the setting of the workshops would be at Bethel Christian Church. The purpose of the workshops is to

promote proper and effective communication during which we will coordinate activities to build awareness, respect, confidence, trust, safety, comfort, and self-esteem in these women so they could understand the value of their stories. The site team members determined the most effective ways to organized successful workshops activities that would motivate and encourage the participants to establish a relationship with the experienced women from the diaspora. As the members discussed various ideas to achieve a successful outcome of the project, the site teams were assigned responsibilities individually. Margarette T. was to provide some important contact information of different organization with similar interests; Margarette N. volunteered to work on the format of a handout, a pamphlet that will provide information for all types of services for the immigrant women; and evangelist Myrta H. is responsible to take the minutes for the meeting and follow-up in reporting. Sister Margarette T. adjourned the meeting at 5PM with a dismissal prayer. The next meeting agenda was for me to update the team with potential candidates, following a meeting with Dr. Peck, executive Director from HCC, a non-profit based organization for the Haitian community.

On March 16, 2013 the site team members were present except Pastor Herold and Rachel Charles. However, there is another site team member Margarette Noel who gladly accepted joining us and brings her expertise to the table. As always, we begin the meeting with prayer because the team and I recognize that without fervent prayers there will be no progress. The meeting started that day with Margarette T. opening in prayer. The purpose of this second meeting was to focus on the expected participants for the project. Last meeting Margarette T. made mention of Dr. Peck, the Executive Director of Haitian Center Council to confirm for possible candidates/ participants. Evangelist Myrta H.

already made attempts to reach out to some possible candidates and I also made my first attempt to have a meeting with Dr. Peck as I left a message with his secretary and his mobile voice mail for an in person meeting. I proposed the development of an agenda that would cover the dates required for the three phases of the project, although the dates are subject to change depending not only on availability but as well on eventualities. I drafted the agenda for all the phases of the project to inform the team on the next meeting of 3/30/13 for their revision and for their approval.

The team and I thought about the process carefully and discussed better ways of operating this outreach. We thought that during the first meeting, the participants would be provided with an overview of the project and explained to them their roles and responsibilities about the project. Visuals (posters), audio-recording, documentary films, bible study, focus groups, and conferences will be utilized. Workshops with other women of faith will be held and refreshments will be served. The participants will be provided with precise information that would empower them and to help them gain trust and secure their confidence to complete the project and to be transformed if possible. The agenda was to start immediately providing assistance for the newcomers as they completed their application. Hence, the decision was to research the visuals to be used, contact a videographer, and identify the cost and the type of refreshment to be served. Margarette N. was to be the logistician of the meetings. She will create a form for the participants, modify and transfer the meeting minutes into a template and provide a copy of existing pamphlets for guidance. The drafted version of forms are to be provided in the next meeting and the minutes to be forwarded to all site team members for review prior the

next meeting. Sister Evangelist Myrta H. adjourned the meeting at 5:00 PM with a dismissal prayer.

In the interim of getting ready to accept new immigrant participants to the program, two of the site team members were not able to fulfill their commitments with the team. R.C stated that she was too busy to continue with the team and it was an oversight about her own busy schedule. She decided to withdraw from the project altogether. Meanwhile, the pastor of the Church, who never said that he could not fulfill his commitment as a site team member, never made an attempt to participate in the meetings. Even after several individual meetings with him, his responses were always the same “I am too busy to participate in the meetings. My wife will fill me in on the information.” I was determined not to allow any hindrances to come between the project and those who are willing to make a difference. I immediately opened my eyes not only to recruit for new immigrant participants but as well, to get in touch with some Haitian women from the diaspora to join me in that endeavor and to become a site team member.

Unquestionably, it was not easy to find participants who were willing to commit to the program. Dr. Peck who was referred to me by one of the site Team members did not called me back after trying to reach out to him so many times, in order to help us in the outreach. Many others that I have invited also had issues with time, transportation, and their job and at times, lack of interest altogether. I asked Pastor H. to allow me to go to the list of names of those who called for prayer from the community so I could invite them to the program. He told me that it was not feasible because he did not want any legal responsibility. I understood his attitude so instead of meeting with the team in person, in March 23, 2013, I called for a teleconference meeting with the site team

members. The goal of the meeting was for all of us to do a massive outreach in our churches, work places and our new acquaintances. I started the teleconference meeting with a prayer, each of us on the telephone line called out our names for attendance purposes. I explained the challenges that we were facing concerning finding new immigrants that were willing to participate in the project. Each of us has to do an outreach so we can begin with the project. We were all in agreement and I prayed the dismissal prayer; the meeting lasted for only one hour. As an associate pastor for Bethel Christian Church, I preached in the Church the fourth Sunday of each month. I began to invite some of the congregants after church to participate in the project. Many of the members usually talked to me about the challenges they are facing in their everyday life, and always seek counseling and prayers after church. I used it as an opportunity to invite them to participate in this project. The response was somewhat good, as some of the women decided to take part in the project.

Before long, I resumed the meeting with the team, and on April 6, 2013 at 6PM at Bethel Christian Church, the site team members were there and a team of participants of three new immigrant women for the first time were there. They were Nadege B., Marie Yola S., and Jeanne A. Margarette Tropnas open the meeting with prayer and the purpose of the meeting was to introduce the participants and to provide an overview of the project. I introduced the participants, followed by team members' introduction. Each participant introduced herself by giving a brief history of their immigrant experience to the U.S. and their challenges. Each one of them was very excited about the program and looked forward to what it had to offer. Team members also introduced themselves as well and shared their roles in the project and small details of their experiences when they

migrated in the U.S. The project overview was provided by Margarette Tropnas. And I talked about the phases of the project and the commitment required in order to make the program a success. We shared some refreshments and asked the participants to share their needs and prayer requests, if any. Almost all of the participants would like to find a bilingual school in the area that teaches English as a second language. The decision was for the team members to investigate ESL school availability in the local area in Brooklyn. Evangelist Myrta Herold adjourned the meeting at 7:00PM with a dismissal prayer.

On Saturday April 13, 2013 the team Members met to refocus and review the idea of the project. All three participants were at the meetings including Mr. Franklin V. (a videographer). He was invited to look at the interaction among the group and to become familiar with the group since I wanted to do a small documentary film with the group as some of the women regaining their voices and telling their stories. In this meeting, the team and I have the privilege to meet with some of the candidates that would participate in sharing their stories. There will be a total of 10 participants, which will be divided into two groups: five with voice (the diaspora) and five without voice (the new immigrants). I took the initiative to briefly summarize the content of the project to Mr. Valme the videographer in order for him to have a clear understanding of the project, and to create a schedule for the filming sessions.

Mr. Valme raised a very important question: “How far will this movement go?” I answered that the project is a model contribution for the community and this model project has the potential to become a movement to any community in need. The team and I were very pleased to see Mr. Valme shared his views and approved the idea of the project which strengthened our focus and made me and the team feel that we were on the

right track. Our commitment and resources will determine how far this movement will go as the team and I are very positive about the outcome of the project.

I also discussed the possibility of having a pre and post questionnaire, for qualitative comparative study, to compare together before teaching and after teaching, to look for any transformative reaction. The purpose of the teaching is to evaluate awareness. Does having more information strengthen and help some people to regain their voices when they become more aware and more appreciative of their cultural heritage through teaching, biblical awareness and increased socialization? They will share their common experiences, as they will be evaluated on what they have learned from each other. As the team and I progressed in securing a relationship with all the participants, we were also preparing them to share their stories to the community. A safe place was created as the team and I empathized with the participants, sharing examples about our own life stories, to help the participants feel comfortable about sharing their own story with each other. The team and I were open to the participant's plight and suffering and none of us was hesitant to look vulnerable in front of each other.

I was finally having a conference call meeting with Dr. Peck, as he accepted my call. I explained to him about the model demonstration project, our plans and goals for the community. He seemed pleased; however, he mentioned to me that he does not have a lot of access with the new immigrants anymore. Had I contacted him a few months back, it would have been more feasible to help me with this endeavor, because he had a program to help the immigrants apply for "TPS" services (temporary protected status). In actuality, the program was completed because it was a temporary service and he moved on to other community services. Still, he promised that he would mention my name to the

assistant Director, who probably would be able to give me access to some of the old folders in file. He would call me back and I was grateful.

The team emphasizes the common ground that binds the participants together: same national interest, cultural background, smell, food, and language. Margarette T reflects on her appreciation to the participants, letting them know that their opinion counts regardless of the language barrier. The team and I noticed signs of confidence in the participants through their facial expressions and their undivided attention. We shared some refreshment together and greeted one another with a holy hugs and I dismiss the meeting with prayer.

On April 20th, 2013 some of the site team members were busy with other responsibilities. For instance, Pastor H and his wife Myrta were in the process of preparing a fundraising banquet for the church and the tedious preparation took precedence over the project and the site location was busy with other activities. Similarly, the other team members could not be there as well for the next meeting. And I was not able to pick up the new immigrants by myself; therefore the meeting on the 20th of April was adjourned. Meanwhile, I was referred to a public health educator named Anna Crermont as a strong candidate for a site team member. I called Ms. Anna C. on the phone, and after a brief conversation with her on April the 20, 2013, we have decided to meet together the following week. Meanwhile, I have a first cousin who was sick for the past twenty years with chronic Crohn's disease, it was a constant battle. The entire family was interceding for many years for my cousin health. I have been praying fervently for his healing because it was an incurable disease. During the month of April he had surgery but this time his health took a turn for the worst and he was intubated that same week

after surgery. The family was in turmoil going back in forth to the hospital because the surgeon did not give us much hope about my young cousin. Nevertheless, the family remained reluctant in prayer. I was devastated about the new s but nevertheless I had to meet some of my deadlines. After my meeting with Ms. Anna C., she decided to join the team although, she said, that she has a very busy schedule “one day at a time” to be more precise. I felt she was trying to tell me, she could not totally commit to the project even though she did not voice it. And in any case, I felt blessed to have another team member with Rachelle’s departure, since Pastor H. has not attended any meeting yet.

The next meeting on the April 27, 2013 was very brief. Most of the team members were busy; the site location was busy in preparation for a fundraising dinner taking place in Brooklyn, New York for Saturday June 1, 2013. I asked all the members to sign the attendance sheet when they arrived as we have been doing from past meetings. The team and I also distributed the consent forms and conveyed clear information on the importance on signing the form. They had an option to go home with the form, to read it carefully before signing it.

Evangelist Myrta H. was gathering data about the new immigrant women’s demeanor as they were in conversation with one another, and answered questions about their feelings towards the program as well as their value systems. Some to the questions were: “How does the new immigrant evaluate their own heritage, tradition, folklore, and their arts since they are living in a different system where as they have no voice?” The meeting was dismissed that day on a very hopeful note.

On May 1, 2013, what my family and I had feared happened—my young cousin got promoted to glory; he was forty-five years young. What an incredible coup to the

family, after all those intercession prayers leaving his thirty- two year old wife, and his baby girl, three years of age. The family was in disarray and inconsolable. I for one was not able to function for a while because I prophesied on their lives so many times not because I was emotionally attached to them, but I have seen God work miracles through me to bless this nuclear family in numerous times. Right after we heard the bad news, my cousin-in-law (the wife) asked me with desperation in her voice “Pastor what happened? Didn’t you say that my husband would be alive to foster her daughter? What Just happened?” I had no answer, except my heart sinks deeply into an unknown hole.

I felt all kinds of different emotions going through me. I felt that I had no more reasons and no more necessities to pray, since my prayers among so many other prayers were not answered. Because of the guilt that I felt so deeply inside of me, I was in a crisis. I was not able to function for a couple of weeks, as I was completely discombobulated. The lives of my cousin-in-law and the immediate family had changed, so had mine.

The site team members were very supportive of my family and me as we were making arrangements to put my cousin’s body to rest. And because of this eventuality the orientation phase of the project could not end at the proposed time. We met again briefly on May 18, 2013. I had to meet with a different videographer, since Mr. Valme was too busy to commit to the rigid schedule of the project. Another videographer name Mr. Hercule B. was recruited by Evangelist Myrta to fulfill the task. Again I explained the entire project and what I wanted to capture in the documentary piece to Mr. Hercule who seemed very excited about the project and had no problem working with the project’s rigid schedule. Evangelist Myrta H. once again reminded the team and me about the time

sensitivity for the fund raising dinner because the team will not be able to meet in Bethel Christian Church sites for the next three weeks. It was another devastating blow to me because of all these other challenges I was facing at once and the team could not afford to miss another three weeks without meeting together.

Through prayers and counseling with some of the team members, I immediately started to look for another location. I was able to secure a location site at my aunt's house. She was still grieving her son, my cousin, but nevertheless, she agreed to let me use her house as the second site for the meetings.

On May 25, 2013 we met in our new location at my aunt's house located in Brooklyn. It was the completion of the first phase which is the orientation phase/socialization phase. I had an appointment with the new videographer who was coming to tape the highlights of the evening. The new recruited site team member Ms. Anna C., the public health educator would come to the meeting for the first time. Margarette T. the social worker prepared food and refreshments so we can complete the first phase of the project on a good note and in a rejoicing mood.

We had many challenges that day, it was raining all day long and the location was new, most people could not find the house and for some unknown reasons some of us thought that we were going to meet at the habitual location. This was a new experience for all of us. A bit frustrated, but with God's help, we all pressed on. The 4:00 PM meeting turned into a 6:00 PM meeting because it was difficult for all of us to get our times synchronized. However, with the help of God and our firm determination we were able to begin the meeting at 6:00PM. I opened the meeting with a thanksgiving prayer to the Lord, while the videographer was filming the highlights of the night. I welcomed the

newcomers in the program—one new immigrant and one woman from the diaspora came to the meeting for the first time. I talked to them about the overview of our goals and plans. Each person was allowed to voice their opinion about the project and how they felt about it; the responses were very positive and very hopeful. Margarette T. was the speaker for that night and she gave a heartfelt message to the immigrant women by letting them know that each person is important to God and to us; each voice counts and is very important; and we are all part of the big tapestry of Heaven. Everyone applauded and eyes were illuminated with hope for the future. The immigrants were happy and thanked the Lord as well as the team for such an inspiration coming straight from the throne of grace. I presented Anna C. to the team and she was very happy to be there with us and she was hopeful and wanted to continue with the project and she was excited. After everyone gave a short positive testimonial about the project, Margarette T. ended her teaching with a powerful Haitian saying “Famn vanyan nous gin force” meaning “country women we are strong”. Anna C. dismissed this session with prayer.

Everyone was happy and hopeful and we were all sitting at the table together sharing a good meal. My uncle and cousin-in-law were there with us and gave us good positive feedback about the project. The team and I were happy; the first phase of the project was completed although we had many challenges and difficulties. However, with the help of God and determination together “we are strong and hopeful.”

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIENCES TO REMEMBER

Socially the language barrier becomes the epitome of all the social challenges facing the Haitian immigrant: financial deprivation, isolation, loneliness, inability to negotiate the system, insecurity, lack of acceptance and inability to adapt to the American way of life. The immigrants for the most part are fearful about not being accepted by the American people, as well as their Haitian counterparts already living in the diaspora. They do not know how to fit in the new society. They experienced “double negative standards.”

Because of the new immigrants’ social conditions, they experienced a feeling of inferiority and loneliness as if they belong nowhere. Their own Haitian counterparts do not want to deal with them because most of those Haitians who have been living in the U.S for such a long time have become so Americanized and acculturated to the new system, that they have no concept at all about the new immigrants’ situation. Since they do not speak English, many in the diaspora do not want to be bothered. No doubt, the newcomers have difficulties having a conversation with them because of the language barrier, adding to the new immigrants feeling isolated from their Haitian counterpart.

Some experts argue that, “At times, the social disconnect suffered the immigrant is so intense that it can become a ‘psychopathological syndrome’ which is characterized

by the loss of identity, a feeling of unreality and strangers (depersonalization) about one's own behavior.”²²

This is why it is very important for the new Haitian immigrant be empowered with hope as they tried to regain their voices and those Haitians from the diaspora recapture their own immigrant experiences through remembrance. Fusing both parts together will help one with regaining and the other one with recapturing. With cooperation from both and in one concert, and with a common plan the Haitian immigrant women will make a beautiful music together.

According to Richard Niebuhr:

Culture in all its forms and varieties is concerned with the temporal and material realization of values. Although it does not mean that the good that human efforts seeks to realize are necessarily temporal or material, however much the concern for these, is part of all the cultural achievement. That is, values relative to man's physical existence beyond food, drink, clothing, progeny and economic order.²³

Helping structure the social pattern of the relationship of the Haitian immigrant women will build awareness about the importance of their values. Such a relationship will make them feel valuable and desirable through their mind eyes but as well the eyes of others. The question is: what practices, techniques and behaviors will help these women experience memory, nurturing, and empowerment? First, I need to look at their social customs. Given that Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with their children close to starvation and their future very cloudy, they are in a dire need of help. However, most Haitians have what you called *joie de vivre* (joy of life) expressed in their entertainment, songs and theaters about their melancholic lives, their poetry, and

²² Nicolas, DeSilva, and Donnelly, *Social Networks and the Mental Health of Haitian Immigrants*, 73.

²³ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 36.

their *marabout de mon coeur* (women of my heart). The comparison of *Haiti chérie* (Darling Haiti) to a dear woman (*choucounne* –a popular Haitian idiom name. Their food is traditional Creole cuisine of Haitian specialties: *riz djon* (black rice Mushrooms); *lambi* (meat of the conch); *griot* (fried pork), *tasot d'inde* or (dried turkey); *acra de morue*, (salt fish fritters); and *pain patate*; (sweet potato pudding). A favorite beverage named *acassan au sirop*, (which is a very thick and sweet powder corn with milk like a shake). Also a very important celebration that all Haitians adopted on every January the 1st as “Haitian Independence” the majority of Haitian served the best known soup as *soupe au Giraumon* (pumpkin soup); a national drink called *clairin* (which is the homemade rum). Their festivities include their passion for music and their popular entertainment linking with a band name *ra ra* associated with lent and Good Friday using blowing long bamboo tubes. Also those *ra ra* bands can be seen in carnival times and this music is filled with emotion and political overtones. They have other traditional performances like the wakes for the dead which are accompanied by storytelling, riddles and religious songs; the cock fight is the sport of choice for the Haitian peasantry—betting on the cockfight and the screaming louder as the fight gets bloodier. Haitian people have a unique social pattern although the circumstances of their economic status sent them abroad; however they need to create a new community to give them a sense of hope.

The goal is to help the Haitian immigrant women acquire skills, techniques that promote strength and support. The strategy is to increase socialization and communication skills; identify resources that will promote and encourage them with tangible benefits; reduce tension and anxiety; and the use of visual aids to help make the teaching experience more palpable and memorable.

During the first phase, which was the orientation phase, the team and I faced so many different challenges coordinating everyone's time together and other unforeseen challenges that caused a lagging of time for the next phase.

On June 1st, 2013 new immigrant women came to the program for the first time accompanied by Anna Clermont to my aunt's house, since we had changed the location of the site during the first phase because the pastor from Bethel had a lot of other activities that he was conducting in the church. The team and I were very happy to meet these new immigrant women. The meeting as usual started at 5:00PM, all the team members were there and we had two new immigrant women with us that day. I started the meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving and worship. I then introduced the team and gave an overview of the program to the new immigrant women, the goal of the program is to create a new community and to bring transformation to the new immigrants, as well as the immigrants from the diaspora—so together we will all help one another and create something new for the future.

After listening attentively to the overview of the program, each new immigrant introduced themselves. Rachelle is quiet, young, she is 24 years old, and eight months pregnant. She arrived to the country about three months ago, and came specifically to the U.S. just to give birth to her unborn baby. Rachelle does not have parents living in the country, she lives with her young cousin and does not speak English, and she relied only on others to help her. However, she talked about her fondness for certain national dishes such as black beans, grits and fish. Ms. Rachelle comes from a Christian faith but listens to all sorts of music, even traditional Voodoo music since they are all contributors to the Haitian Culture she said. Rachelle appreciates the exciting season of carnival because it is

also contributing to Haitians ancestral history. As she was introduced to the program, Rachelle was ecstatically happy and said “please do not stop this program after the project is over because, this program can really make a difference in our lives.” It was a revelation to all of us, to hear the positive testimony of one of the newly arrived immigrants, especially as it was her first time visiting the program and her reaction was heartfelt. She has a very strong positive attitude about the program.

The team and I welcomed as well the other immigrant woman name Mona who is a much older woman. She left Haiti fourteen years ago, as she shared her love and appreciation for the Haitian music as well however, although she had certain restrictions about the type of music she listened too. She also shared her taste in food such as fish, fried goat, the Haitian traditional pumpkin soup and *mais moulu*, cooked yellow corn. She is a pastor’s wife and because of that she is very cautious, very quiet and discreet about information she wants to share with us. As a girl scout in Haiti, she said that the discipline she acquired helps her manage her circumstances in life. I was aware that Mona is going through a whole series of trials and tribulations. However, she seemed very skeptical to share her personal information with us; she was not totally convinced that the team and I were there to help and to strengthen those in need.

With reluctance, Mona spoke a little bit about her familial and economic situation and although she has been living here in the U.S. for more than fourteen years but because of hardship she could not even secure a place to stay. I did not want to insist too much; moreover I told both immigrants that this model project is not only to help increase verbalization skills but as well to increase socialization and communication skills. The program is also there to create a safe place for them and to provide resources

to help them access pertinent and specific information. Anna was the presenter that evening and the topic was on relaxation techniques that teach them different ways to reduce tension and anxiety. Anna was very eloquent in her words of encouragement as she mentioned different techniques to promote self-disclosure. She also invited the immigrants to follow-up with her and not to hesitate to call her office at Kings County Hospital. We had a very productive meeting and the immigrants felt very good about the future outcome of this program. Margarette Noel dismissed us with prayer.

Our agenda for the next meeting on June 8, 2013 was to watch a documentary film about the “Human Experience” that narrated the true story of two brothers who embark on a remarkable quest to find meaning and light in a seemingly dark world. The brothers begin their journey with the homeless on the streets of New York City, and continue on to spend time with orphaned children in Peru and the enigmatic lepers of Ghana. The voyage continues across Continents and through tremendous suffering, hope, love and forgiveness, which are the elements that would propel enlightenment and awaken the beauty and the resilience of the Human Spirit.

On June the 8, 2013, it was part of my plan to allow the immigrant to have this tremendous experience, not only for all of them to sit together and watched this ground breaking story; but as well for them to feel like a new community. As we began the meeting with an opening prayer by one of the new immigrants, Marie Denise, all of us were sitting together around the table. The table contained all kinds of goodies: popcorn, bottles of water, juice, and fruits. The videographer was there to capture that special moment and we were all relaxed and ready to experience something new.

The documentary movie was in English and the running time was 1 hour and 29 minutes. The cast and crew from the documentary movie were: Jeffrey Azize, Clifford Azize, Michael Campo and Matthew R. Sanchez and Director Charles Kinnane. This groundbreaking movie showed our humanity as we are all looking for meaning and sense about life for ourselves; meanwhile the evil is always among us. It is like the human race is violently being pulled in toward an unknown force that is much greater than life itself. For some, it is “Destiny” without any big effort they were normally born with “a silver spoon” in their mouth without much effort coming from them. While others were born with “no spoons at all” and still others fight mercifully to find meaning about life but to no avail.

All of us in the group were sitting at the table of meaning, as individually the immigrants, including the videographer, were making meaning out of the event that was going on. As the group was looking at the bigger picture, the suffering of human life depicted in this documentary—war, famine, diseases, immigrant condition and poverty—just to name a few, the table became the table of Mercy like the “Mercy sit.”

Margaret T. was translating for the others who could not speak English. So many were moved by the human condition and the suffering, I could see tears in their eyes. After the movie, the team openly talked about the situation with each other and everyone gave their own opinion and some of them felt more reassured and more convinced in their search for hope and meaning. While everyone was enjoying the moment a series of questions were asked about demography, biography and autobiography; their opinion about their living conditions and arrangements, religion, faith, economy status, what brought them to the U.S., their fears, hopes and aspirations

for the future. The women from the Diaspora were very inspired as they were recapturing their own immigrant experience. We were six in attendance not including the videographer's crew.

Even the videographer's crew, who are also Haitian, were talking about the positive view of this project. The women were again reminded to fill out the consent forms to make sure that we were all on the same page. As I closed this session with prayer, everyone was dismissed with a holy embrace and hope for the future.

The following meeting date, which is June 18th, was cancelled because of different activities going on with the members as well as the new immigrants. One of the new immigrants gave birth and another one was having trust issues—not so much with the group but because of her spouse's position in the community—she was fearful that she would hurt his authoritative position in the community, if she divulges too much information. One particular new immigrant found another job and it became a challenge for her to be with us at the time of the meetings. Further, that same week, I was meeting with Anna Clermont at her place of work to meet with other new immigrant women, since she has access with the just arrived immigrant women who were usually referred to her through social workers from the hospital for family planning and preventive care measures.

As I met with different immigrant women, and tried to promote self-disclosure among them it becomes self-evident how difficult it is to realize that goal; most of the women were not consistent. They were encouraged with tangible benefits as they were accessing some important information that the diaspora provided for them, such as help with housing, how to fill out an application, letters translated, and help with

transportation. The new immigrants were grateful for the difference the team and I were making.

One June 22, 2013 we met at my aunt's house and there were eight in attendance and two visitors with us, Nathe and Charles, who were there for support and to give their input. Margarette T., the speaker that evening opened the meeting with a short prayer. She was to talk about her view on Haitian culture for all those who have not been consistently present in the meetings. The teaching was about acceptance of their values, tradition and narrative story so they can be empowered with hope; and how the women needed to accept each other and learned how to self-disclose through their own personal story telling. They needed to learn how to increase their social skills so they can strengthen and appreciate the subtle differences in each other's culture. During the discussion about culture and socialization, I emphasized how important it was to stand on the biblical approach, although the third phase would reflect more on biblical teaching.

Margarette T. talked about some of the cultural points that most Haitians have in common such as: customs, habits, practices and food. On the other hand, she also pinpoint that even though all Haitians speak the same language, they used a different dialect to communicate. For examples: how one word can be used by one set of people one way, and the same word has a different meaning for a different group depending on the location they were raised. The word "cassava" can be used to replace the word "woyal" when the dough (manioc starch) is covered with peanut butter. Although the word might have a slightly different meaning for the majority, most Haitians understand each other.

As Ms. Margarette T. goes on sharing about Haitians' cultural appreciation, she shared also about parents' responsibilities to instruct their children so they may develop a sense of love and belonging to their inherited culture in order to prevent a sense of cultural inferiority. The speaker also spoke about the importance of teaching their Haitian American children, on how to appreciate their heritage, and to communicate to their grandparents who do not speak English in their inherited language Creole or French.

All of us were happy about the presentation that evening. At the conclusion of the meeting Ms. Anna, one of the site team, from the Diaspora took the time to say thank you to everyone, for her dedicating time to this project, as she believes in the value of raising children and adults to be proud of their inherited gifts. Evangelist Myrta H. adjourned the meeting at 7PM with a dismissal prayer.

On June 29, 2013 the team and I met to discuss some issues we were having with the videographer. Some of the previous agreements I had with him were not clear, so I had decided to bring all the team together for a different agreement altogether. I asked Mr. Blanc to bring a copy of the work so the team and I could have an idea of the previous videotaping. The entire team was there, and we watched the previous taping and decided to continue with Mr. Blanc because it would be almost impossible to start with someone else to do the taping for the project because of recapturing the previous images. Some of the new immigrants changed jobs and others found new employment while some others had other issues.

Through prayers and council I have decided to continue with the videotaping, although it had gotten very challenging and costly. At this level decisions had to be made and be precise and I did just that. The entire team agreed with my decision to continue

with the videotaping, and another written contract was in place and I ended the meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Our next meeting was on July 13, 2013. Five of us were in attendance that day, three site team members and two immigrants. The team and I had a focus group with the two immigrants to talk about their cultural heritage, diversity among themselves, what foundational values they would like to pass down through generations if any, and if there is, what obstacles could stop such progress down the line. We focused on cultural beliefs, rituals, religions, (Haiti has different types of rituals) and their main sources of reliance, their reality, ceremonies, superstitions, and their child rearing practices and their treatment of the elderly. The immigrants were very much in tune with their own cultural background although, some of them felt a bit disassociated with their sense of belonging because they are living in a different part of the hemisphere, in a new place with a new language with people with different values.

The women were mostly comfortable with each other because of their familiarity. While some other women become more comfortable with each other, only if they realized that they mattered to the other. I was explaining to them, once the community becomes aware of their plight and their suffering by assuming the responsibility to help one another; it would more likely be beneficial to them. Those who became conscientious will help the immigrant grow. Others assuredly will remain skeptical because of pride, or lack of communal togetherness, perhaps they may have not much to offer, and are still in the need of help themselves. However, Haitians in general have to let go of their false pride and selfishness by learning on how to create a new community.

The focus group was very productive, as the women were talking about their cultural heritage and traditions and their likes and their dislikes. After the focus group meeting, the team and I asked the women questions about their feelings, emotional states, their hope and aspiration, how far can they visualize a tailor-made solution for their particular problems? What input if any do they have about this program? The responses were very favorable and I will talk about that later.

The focus of the group that day was mostly on the home culture not the host culture. The focus group was to help the Haitian women understand how important it is for them to not only appreciate their own culture, but to embrace their cultural and social differences. The Haitian women were no longer living in Haiti, and they are in dire need of help to survive the host culture. Although the latter did not create their misery and their disequilibrium, just the fact they are living in a new land with a new shift in socialization and culture, they must become one to help one another. They must use their differences as a ladder to go higher. Everyone was smiling and commented about the positive vibration they felt about the meeting. Margarette N. adjourned the meeting with a short prayer.

The second phase of the program was to be completed as of July 19, 2013. The team did not meet on July 6 as well as July 13, 2013 but I was actively interviewing other Haitian immigrants that I met at KCH (Kings County Hospital) with the help of our team member, the public health educator. In those meetings, Anna and I were asking the new immigrants questions about their culture, personal situation and their stories. The response was very good as we met with four different Haitian immigrant women who were very happy for the most part to tell their stories.

Their stories were very moving, touching and brings an emotional moment to all of us, as they were happy to tell their stories, their experiences about living in this country. I took notes and asked the new immigrants to sign a consent form after I explained to them the content of the form and the project in order to release their stories if need be. The women signed the forms with a glimpse of trust from their eyes and the willingness to talk more about their situation with faces of hope. Anna and I listened carefully about these women's plight and jotted a few notes not only about their situations but as well as their answers to our questions.

I exchanged information with them not only about the program, but as well as pertinent telephone numbers and important addresses on how to find us in case we can help them with any issue. July 20 was the completion of Phase two of the program and we were all excited because we had many challenges and we are tired of chasing after the women because they have not been consistently available. Even the site team members missed quite a few meetings because they had other obligations. On July 20, the meeting started at my aunt's house, although I had in mind returning to Bethel Christian Church when time allowed. Meanwhile, we were enjoying my aunt's house which is very spacious and very relaxing, the atmosphere there is perfect. My last communication with the pastor of Bethel Christian Church was not too favorable because he told me that he was still busy making plans for other activities and the location was still not available as often as we would like to use it. Hence to keep the flow of the program moving smoothly, I made a decision with the team to stay at my aunt's house to prevent any further conflict. The lighting was very good, the chairs very comfortable and my uncle who is an

evangelist wanted us to remain there. He also had a big interest on the project because of the potential positive outcome for the community. I was blessed.

My uncle asked many questions about the project and all those visiting with us, and while doing the teaching asked questions as well. Almost everyone after hearing a summary of the project had something positive to say. July 20, 2013 we opened the meeting with a short prayer as we greeting everyone in the name of the Lord. There were seven present at the meeting, and the agenda for the day was about the questionnaires. The immigrants were asked to answer questions about their feelings thus far about the program. They had to answer questions about their progress if any, and about their learning. I allow the women to talk about anything and everything. Meanwhile, the team was observing their behaviors, gestures, and demeanor, face movements, and the team was taking notes at the same time. The immigrant women had no reservation talking about the project, as far as the team and I could see, hear and understand. Some of the women were very talkative while others still had some reservation and others were a bit disconnected.

I talked about the proposed next meeting agenda and how this phase from the project is important for all of us, and especially the new immigrants who are in need of a positive integrating system. The goal for this phase, which is the biblical phase, is to help the members find strength, and shape their views in positive ways so they can be empowered and regain their voices. I encouraged everyone to try not to miss too many sessions in the biblical phase. The plan is to teach bible stories, listen to conferences, read scriptures and meditate on them, find the meaning for their special circumstances. Learn how to pray and to have workshops with other women of faith, to be a beacon for each

other, as they will be identified with the empowerment stories coming from the bible and others.

We were all excited and looking forward to the biblical phase and for most of us, the fact that we have been waiting for long, the biblical phase some of us called “*the cherry on top of the pie.*” Faith in something that will determine your persistence and attitude and how long your battles will last. Faith has a way of giving strength in the worse circumstances in life. So we were all empowered.

Everyone was listening attentively and could not wait to begin the third phase of the project. The prospective date is August 3, 2013 to September 28, 2013. The goal was to start immediately because time was of the essence and needed to be allotted for so interaction could occur among the women and healing could begin. Margarette N. and evangelist Myrta H. spoke a word of encouragement to all of the people, as we were ready to adjourn this meeting. Anna C. says a few words of prayer for closing.

CHAPTER 5

THE BIBLE NARRATIVE AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN

The unique challenges facing the Haitian immigrant women in the community provide a platform to create a vision for this program to reach out to Haitian immigrant women and engage them with different skills such as biblical principles, skills acquisition, coaching and promoting support, strength, and encouragement.

Some of the major problems the Haitian immigrant women are facing in the community are an identity crisis, despair, and loss of hope and interest in their own narrative story. They felt marginalized, forgotten by their own community and society. They lack social access while living in a different country, unable to speak the language of the country; and all that made them feel collectively helpless. Part of the solution of their problem can be a “Sister’s keeper” just as in Ruth and Naomi’s friendship, which is one of the oldest testimonies in the Old Testament of female bonding. When women bond together there will always be a flow of ideas about empowerment, encouragement, hope and the support of others as they create a bigger story. Renita J. Weems stated that the relationship between Ruth and Naomi’s story typifies the special bond that can often develop between women despite differences in age, nationality and religion. Their friendship survived the test of time despite the odds against women as individuals, as friends, a women living alone without family and spouse²⁴

²⁴ Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away* (Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, 1988), 25.

Ruth was a Moabite and went on living in a foreign land with her mother-in-law Naomi according to Ruth 1: 11-16. “

Return home, my daughters, why would you come with me? I am too old, Ruth replied. Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there and I will be buried.

Ruth was ready to create a new song in a new country because she was not alone, she has a support system, she has a sister, a mother, a friend, a hope, and she was ready to move on. Ruth understood her “Story” although she was a foreigner in a strange land, but she was not completely isolated, because she had a support system (Naomi) as she allowed her support system to work on her behalf. Ruth was also ready to experience God in a new meaningful way, letting go of the “old” and embrace the “new” without forgetting where she comes from, and because, she was ready to move on by allowing her support system to work for her. Ruth experienced a new life with Boaz, she was readying herself and allowing help into her life as she opened and embraced her new title and her new voice in the community.

The new immigrant women will understand their community, as they place themselves in a position to understand their covenant not only with each other but mostly with God. For instance, the women will be encouraged to remember their stories and engaged as a community in the reality of God's promises and protection, biding with love and hope. This project is certainly emphasized on the gift of friendship and different seasons of life.

I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the Land of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land (Ex 3:7-9).

The second story is also a story about hope and restoration because God always remembers his promises and his grace for the afflicted, the foreigner and the forgotten. God's project of restoration is always about a paradigm shift, as the people are living with nothing, God makes space for the people inside of himself and gives them plenty so they can be transformed and satisfied.

The expected outcome for this project is for the immigrant women to "be restored, transformed and be hopeful" through their own narrative story and Bible engagement will learn how to be a "sister's keeper." The expectation for this outcome is creating a communal support among the newly arrived Haitian immigrant women and the women from the diaspora. Some are getting an opportunity to remember and recapture their own narrative story; others will reclaim their own voices through support, teaching, Bible engagement and empowerment. Joseph V. Crockett stated that "Bible engagement can be the construction of shared meanings developed through authentic dialogue and brings God's word to life, become holistic and linked to the lifestyles of people, groups, communities and cultures."²⁵

Without a doubt, engaging the Bible in a meaningful language, such as your maternal language and the shared meaning of the people definitely brings God to that secret place into your hearts. This secret place will produce later on a spacious place where the people can get abundance physically, emotionally and spiritually. The customs and the culture of the Haitian people are very unique. According to Michael J Dash, "Since 1970 external migration has made Haitians most visible to the outside world. The increasing exodus of Haiti was exacerbated in the 1990's as Haitians fleeing political

²⁵ Anglican Consultative Council, *Deep Engagement, Fresh Discovery: Report of the Anglican Communion "Bible in the Life of the Church" Project* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2013), 5.

persecution as much as economic hardship left their homeland in thousands and created a major human-rights crisis.²⁶ The situation becomes a “Catch-22” though, migrating externally can be a deliverance but one with consequences. The Haitian political and economic situation stole the people’s *joie de vivre* because many Haitians would rather remain in their own paradise, enjoying their own social cultural surroundings, stories, legends and ancestral practices and imageries. However, they had to migrate to a different land and brought with them all their cultural, social and religious values.

According to the Haitian religious values, the popular saying out there is always Haiti is 90% Catholic and 100% Voodoo despite the fact that the elite disapprove of voodoo. The Protestants might account for 10%, but these are less prone to practice voodoo in Haiti. However little the difference seemed to be between the Protestant and the Catholic belief, there are many who believed in the finished work of Jesus Christ and become huge forces in the country, faith tied religion to politics in Haitian history.

As Haitians struggled for independence and human fairness, the question was can a biblical story help shape the positive view of the immigrant Haitian women’s condition? As I proposed for the Haitian immigrant women to work with other women of faith, to learn bible stories, to inquire techniques and skills that will promote strength and support for them. To read the Bible and to learn how to pray and listen to testimonies to increase their faith so they can find strength among the members, themselves and others in order to be empowered. We begin this journey calling it the Action Phase. This is the last phase, where the immigrant women will feel empowered and hopeful by others’ stories and reclaim their own voices. On August 3rd 2013, six of us met over at my aunt’s

²⁶ Michael J. Dash, *Culture and Customs of Haiti* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 42.

house to begin the last phase of the project. Although we were very tired because it had been a long journey and with many ups and downs, we were all there. The meeting started with an opening prayer by Margarette T. There were two newcomers with us that day, I once again explained the project to everyone and introduced Margarette T. because she was the speaker for that day.

She was very eloquent and spoke about Queen Esther in Esther 4:12-17 and Jeremiah 29:11. Margarette T. was explaining how the plan of God for a person or a group does not differ and does not change. The plan of God lasts forever and his plan is always to prosper his people and to give them a future. Things happen at times in ways we do not understand, in ways we have not expected, and that will later on show God's glory and supremacy. She emphasizes the love of God for the foreigners, the marginalized, the forgotten ones and those who are oppressed and how God loves them all. The point for that session was that the main goals for the love of God is to give the voiceless a voice, just like he did for Esther, for Moses and just like he will do for each one of the Haitian immigrant women. After the lecture, I saw faith coming out of these women and many of them started to talk about their own situations. The newcomers Lillian and Mary spoke and were happy about the project. Sister Anna C. adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM with a dismissal prayer.

On August 10, 2013 instead of meeting together, I had a phone conference called with the team members. We talked about how to move forward with the biblical phase and on how to engage the people with the Bible so it will come alive and have meaning for them. We talked about it and decided to have a teaching conference on Esther Chapter 4 and everyone will contribute to the teaching and will explain how it has meaning to

them. Both the women from the diaspora and the new immigrants will make a contribution with their voices in order to help one another.

On August 17, 2013, seven of us were there, the meeting was opened by Pastor Herard as she allowed the Holy Spirit complete control of the meeting to speak, to bring meaning to his word, so the people can come out with a different prospective and be transformed. The focus was on the Bible and to allow the immigrants the opportunity to voice what they have learned thus far. As I opened the meeting with a word of encouragement, I talked about the challenges, the trials and the tribulations of the people and the roles Pastors and members of the congregation need to take, such as that of compassion in a manner of Jesus Christ because it is God's will and God's desire. The people must always know that God is with them regardless how violent is the storm of life; Jesus is always on the boat sitting next to those in need. I also made an appeal to summon the women's recollection to return to them so they will always remember that we are for the majority of women of faith sharing our experiences with each other, to help one another. I asked Margarete T. once again to talk about the passage of Esther, because there is a truth to it that envelope the story and such truth can propel transformation in lives as the women started to discover that "our lives are ordained by God."

Margarete T. started this time by carefully mentioning the four characters of this passage. They are King Ahasuerus and his wife, Vashti, and Esther and Mordcai .It was unique how the speaker focused on Esther as a woman without a voice, who later became Queen and was given a voice to deliver her people from their enemy, Haman, who plotted against the Jews. She brought the meaning of this story and motivated it to move

forward to reality, showing how God honored Esther and gave her a voice in due time. This is the reality for these immigrant women to be transformed by having their own voice, so they can go on and change other immigrant women's lives.

Following this further, I asked one of the new immigrant participants Ms. Denise A. to share with the team how can she relate to Esther? Where do you see the Haitian immigrant in the story? Something interesting happened. She had a fear about not getting public assistance because she did not want to delay the process of having her children come from Haiti. The participants have been with us for almost six months, however Ms. Denise, did not feel comfortable enough with the team or did not have enough faith in the program to ask her question. Asking her questions now, the team and I perceived a behavioral changed. Denise did confirm it for the team, saying how grateful she feels for the work the team and I are doing. Apparently, she feels more comfortable with us and with the program; it was a very hopeful moment for the team at this point. Margarette T. who is a social worker and I, the RN/minister, clarified the matter for the participant who said that she understood, as we explained to Ms. Denise about the myriad of opportunities offered to help immigrants. She was very grateful and later on, Ms. Denise recaptured the question about what Esther's story meant for her as a Haitian immigrant woman. She explained "I too am a foreigner to the United States, just as Esther had to leave her country to go to a strange place. I also had to leave my country Haiti and my children." As she goes on to say, she is living a struggling life for now, yet she knows in her heart that she will overcome some day. She said, "*Me too, I have a story and a desire to tell my story.*" Margarette N. was not physically present at the meeting that day. Nevertheless, she joined us by teleconference call and she was asked to give her view as well on the

story. For Margarette N. she finds Esther with the characteristics of an obedient and patient woman. For Evangelist Herold her view was on the self-sacrificial characteristic of Esther who was determined and trusted in the Lord. The entire team spent a lot of time elaborating on the passage of Esther; we were very detailed oriented on Esther's characteristics. The whole team talked about her silent suffering, her awaiting patience for the deliverance of her people, her faith in God, her fasting for three days, risking her life when she presented her demand to the king, her reluctant attitude not to abandon shape regardless of the situation, because Esther knew that Jesus was always in the boat and it was not a matter about what she could see, hear, understand and be able to do; it was all about faith, trust and patience. This is the story the immigrant women adopted as a "shibboleth," our slogan, our favorite saying.

Before the meeting ended, I reiterated the importance of having every participant complete the consent form. The time was getting closer for some of the participants to share their story on the video, since I arranged with the videographer to do a small documentary for the conclusion of the program. Everyone that day had a great meeting according to his or her own testimonial words. I adjourned the meeting with a word of prayer. On August 24, 2013, I was with the videographer trying to finalize all the arrangements for the last taping. I had to plan every part of the event such as the best site to complete the project, those who would be invited, the participants had to be ready to tell their story, and I needed to know the logistic for the videotaping. The agenda for that day has to be in a chronological sequence of events, and time was also factored in because of my budget. After my meeting with the videographer I confirmed with evangelist Myrta H. the last project meeting would take place at Bethel Christian Church.

It was confirmed and I gave her all the logistic details so the pastor of the Church would be aware and keep that time available for the team.

On August 31, 2013, I met with Anna C. the educator at Kings County Hospital to have another meeting with other newly arrived immigrants, and to go over the survey form. We went over the questions content for the survey because my first objective for this project was to increase awareness among the new Haitian women about their values and narrative story; secondly, for the Haitian women to appreciate their cultural heritage; and thirdly, to be empowered and have a voice. Therefore, our terms had to be well defined since we are looking into variables such as attitude, values, feeling, fears etc. to be measured. Anna C. helped me put the survey questions together by helping me type all the questions and I administered the surveys to the Haitian immigrant women as an oral interview. Many of the Haitian immigrants were very happy to answer questions as well as tell their stories. The time was well spent and before leaving her office, I prayed and thanked God for all that he is doing among us Haitian women, putting us together and the strength that he is giving us to help one another. It was a blessing and I thank God especially for my team.

On September 7, 2013 the entire team met for another meeting at my aunt's house. Seven of the participants were there. I began the meeting with a prayer as I always do, thanking God for his goodness and grace towards the women and the access that he provided for us so the women can reclaim their voices and recaptured their memories. The focus for this meeting was to administer the surveys to the immigrant women who were there because the team and I were experiencing some push back from some of the participants because of lack of communication. One of the participants finally had the

courage to ask me if telling her story would affect her financial benefits. I explained it to her that it would not; however Haitian people for the most part have a trust issue, and a false pride issue. The survey was administered to all the new immigrant women and every one answered the questions, some with passion, and some with reluctance. Nevertheless, as they were answering the questions, another team was taking field notes as data to be analyzed later on.

I then selected the team members from the diaspora to tell their stories on camera, and to talk about how they began their journey as an immigrant woman in the U.S., and how they overcame what challenges they encountered when they first arrived in the U.S. Does participating in the project transform them? I chose two women from the diaspora Anna C. and Evangelist Myrta H. the pastor's wife. Both women were excited to tell their stories at the completion of the program.

Clearly, as the new immigrants had some issues about telling their stories in front of the video for the documentary part, I had to decide to keep them anonymous. The team and I felt very good about the decision. One of the new immigrants named Yola felt comfortable enough to accept being interviewed in front of the camera for testimonial purposes. Some of the new immigrants cleared me so I can give an excerpt of their stories on camera. As I was working on the logistics of the final day for the project, I helped the immigrant women from the diaspora with the outline of their own stories and the timing. The story should run only 7 minutes on camera for the coordination and synchronization of time. In conclusion, before ending the meeting that day, we administered the survey questions to three of the new immigrant women and asked them to talk a little bit about the program thus far. One of them finds the program to be a great opportunity for the

Haitian women immigrant to tell their stories and to have the opportunity to disclose their struggles. Another finds the sessions to be somewhat therapeutic and helping as it counsels her. Still others felt that this program gives them hope and courage and expect the program to become a movement of hope; they want it to continue after the completion of this model project. The Haitian immigrant women talked about how they are in desperate need of education and more teaching and more conscious people to spend time with them. I heard both sides, the voice of the diaspora immigrant women and I also heard the voices of the new immigrant women. On that note, evangelist Myrta H. adjourned the meeting at 7:30PM with a dismissal prayer.

Instead of meeting with the team on September 14, Anna C. and I met on September 13 around 4PM to meet with the Haitian Council member Mathieu Eugene of the 40th District at 123 Linden Blvd in Brooklyn to see if we could have a meeting with him because we did not have an appointment. The plan was to let the councilman know about the model project that the team and I were putting together. Pursuing this further, Anna and I identified resources in the councilman office that could be a good help for the immigrant women. I plan to use them in a brochure as important information that would allow the immigrant women have access to the system in a more productive way.

Therefore, Anna C. felt that it would be a great idea to meet with the Haitian councilman to ask him about pertinent information that could be of help to the immigrants. She felt very positive that she would accomplish much more in this meeting, if it happened since the councilman is also a friend of hers. Anna C. thought the Councilman was in his office that day. Unfortunately he was not at his office, yet I had a chance to meet with his secretary and explained to her about the model project that I am working on, she listened

attentively to the details and asked me to send an e-mail to inform the councilman before she can talk further about it and let us have the information that I needed. The secretary gave me the councilman's personal business card with his e-mail address, telephones; fax numbers, office information and her information as well. Even though I did not get to see the councilman that day, Anna C and I felt that the meeting with the secretary was very productive. I thanked the secretary for her patience and we left.

As the team and I were getting ready for the completion of the program, I decided to invite all the immigrant women and their friends to come to the last meeting and rejoice with us. The last meeting was organized as a celebration with music, food, storytellers, video graphing and friends to celebrate our six months' model project. On September 21, 2013, the team members and some of the participants met at Bethel Christian Church located at 885 East 34th street in Brooklyn New York, the original site to complete the model project. The attendees were the team members, director, the videographer and assistant, and the new immigrants and four visitors were among us. We were about fifteen.

The day was scheduled so that the diasporas Anna and evangelist Myrta would share their stories and I would talk about a couple of excerpts about the new immigrant women stories. We began the meeting at 7:00PM that day; everything was in place. "Lights, camera, and action," the storytellers introduced their stories with their cultural background, their dream, their struggles and their plight when they first came to live in the U.S., and how they overcame it. They specified their dedication, their commitment and hard work. The important phrase to catch up that day was "*commitment and dedication.*" Both storytellers had humble beginnings; both of them had to be persistent

and be aware of their values and what they wanted to accomplish in life especially as immigrant women living in a different country, and unable to understand the language of the country. These women had to be aware of their social location and learn how to appreciate their cultural heritage. They had to be courageous despite all the strikes against them, they had to learn how to access the system, and as not yet able to speak the language, they had to be resourceful. Their stories were heartfelt, brought emotional value to the equation, some part of their stories brought a smile, and other parts of the story brought tears of sadness and at times tears of victory. A pin drop could be heard as everyone was listening attentively to the plight, oppression, and misery of human life. Their stories felt like a human drama that unfolded in front of all our eyes that day, except it was a real living drama as the women were strong enough to hold on to their courage and allow all of us to enter in their sacred place. All of the participants were right there with them and cheering them and at times spoke words of encouragement like (go for it girl, you got it, God is awesome)—the participants were their own cheering squad. After the storytellers gave their stories, eyes were more illuminating, smiles looked brighter, voices sounded stronger and the stares of the new immigrant were more sustainable. In the light of the of the storytellers stories, I substitute my voice to share excerpts about the experiences of some of the immigrant Haitian women living in New York City.

The story connection between the new immigrant women and those from the diaspora is for the latter to understand, that almost all new immigrants went through heartache, pain, and disconnection in their social location and environment. Regardless, whatever the immigrant women have been through and are still going through, women

from the diaspora are able to connect with their struggles and they desired to help them remain hopeful. I explained to the participants and friends who were there, the bigger picture is that we are all connected by similar struggles. Although there might be slight differences, we are all struggling. Everyone was listening to the stories with special attention because the stories contributed to the legitimate reasons for conducting this study in the first place, to address the immigrant experience in New York City. The main point is not to ask the immigrant women to forget their past. As a matter of fact, together with the team, I am asking them to recapture their memory and others to regain their voices so they will not feel helpless and hopeless. The proposition is for the new immigrant to be strengthened and to be empowered with hope, while those in the diaspora recapture their memory.

Joining all the stories together and investing time for one another was to redirect the women to a resolution and to remind them that each voice counts and each of their stories is another immigrant woman's story. Since the light of hope does not stop with them but continuous as a beacon of fire, a tower of light to enlighten others by reclaiming their voices.

I interviewed one of the immigrant women named Yola, who has been with us throughout the entire six months during the project, although she missed a few meetings just like most of us. She was very happy to talk about her feelings towards the project. I allowed her to tell how she feels and what were her expectations and were they met? All her answers were very positive. Ms. Yola said verbatim: "this program is making a difference in every immigrant life who participates in it and the program exceeds her expectations". And she feels that such a program should be continued as a movement not

just for a temporary model project. All the participants and friends were all satisfied with the way Ms. Yola answered the questions and all of us were very encouraged. At the end of the session I reminded everyone that “*only what we do for the Lord will last*” and everyone repeated the same phrase that “*only what they do for the Lord will last.*”

This session was over and the third phase of the project was completed and we all worshipped the God almighty and we all rejoiced together. All the people and the participants were fellowshiping together by having a small reception and congratulating one another and thanking the Lord for bringing the team and the immigrant women together and keeping them together to make a difference in one another’s life.

Pastor Jackes, another associate Pastor from Bethel Christian Church dismissed the meeting that evening at 10:00PM. This was the completion of the six months project. Pastor Herold senior pastor of the Church was also there for the finale. When he was invited to come and fellowship with us at the table of love, he at first declined stating “I have too many things to do this evening.” Everyone left the church feeling hopeful and strengthened, according to their testimony thinking about a better tomorrow. No one who participated with the team, and continued with the project, could deny the outcome. In other words, the beginning short-term transformation that was outwardly visible is becoming a “MOVEMENT” for a better tomorrow, not only for the Haitian immigrant women, but also for all immigrants.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION PROCESS

Method of evaluation 1

In March 2013, I will do a pilot testing through a survey as a sample and design strategy according to Arlene Fink,²⁷ and thereafter, the immigrant women will be interviewed about their experiences telling their stories. As I propose for my first Goal, to build awareness in the immigrant women about the importance and values of their experiences. In Strategy 1 the new immigrant women will be interviewed through a series of questions that will be administered either by phone or in person. Their responses would have no specific format as I would allow them to speak impromptu, so they can feel free to talk without restraint, just so I can understand where they are, how they get there, where they would like to be in the future, and how can we make a difference in their lives and what they would like to see happened in the near future .All data will remain in a questionnaire form and will be saved for further analysis for the evaluation of the model project.

Strategy 1:2 a safe place will be established and reinforced by building a list of ground rules on posters and placed them on the wall where the meeting will be taken place in order to create a trusting environment for everyone. Women will be encouraged to talk about their stories, their pain, and their problems as the stakeholders will also be

²⁷ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication, 2009), 4.

encouraged to talk about their own stories, and observed for any changes in data as the team and I will gather information. That way, I will obtain the data that I need to answer all the evaluation questions later on. Additionally the first survey questionnaire will be used later on as a benchmark for document analysis in helping determine the outcome Analysis.

Strategy 1:3 around April 2013, I propose the immigrant women will be in serious dialogue with each other. They will reflect on their own narrative stories, they will have one-on-one interactions and they will engage each other as stakeholders because all of us have a beneficial part on this process. Meanwhile, the women from the diaspora, me, and a couple of neutral friends will help observe the interaction among the immigrant women around the table, such as verbatim quotation, opinions, feelings, behaviors dialogue with sufficient content for interpretation and further evaluation.

In my first evaluation of Goal I, my question was: do the women accept their values and narrative story? My proposition was based on the premises that “how people are treated affect how they value themselves and in return, how they treat others.” My design strategy is “qualitative data”—data collection fieldwork strategies looking at the phenomenological doctrine of Verstehen, which undergirds qualitative inquiry as I try to understand and look at the unique human capacity making sense of their world.²⁸ All information will be collected through interviews and open-ended questions, their experiences, their opinions, and even their perception as they voiced it. I focused on the feedback from the table meetings as the stakeholders and I gave the new immigrants a platform to go into their world, their plight, their pain, and their routines. I listened to

²⁸ Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 55.

them attentively and understand their world that they are actually living in now and allow them to reflect as the team and I make them feel safe so they can reflect and voice their opinion impromptu and be aware of their own values. I made quality observation reports and described what I see, hear and come to understand. During the first few meetings the immigrant women were very skeptical about almost everything, and out of eight immigrant women, only four of them were willing to be more open about their experiences. It was mostly a struggle to get them to come to the meetings, not only were they not committed to the cause, but I had to make arrangements for them to be in the meetings almost every week. The day of the meetings some of the participants would not pick up their phone. The entire process was very challenging, as I was trying to bring stability to the meetings. Nevertheless, I remained reluctant by pushing my way through and insist on teaching the new immigrant women and showing them empathy and love; explaining to them over and over that my intentions were genuine; and all I wanted was to help them get their voices back as Haitian immigrant women living in a new land. Before long I realized that as the meetings continued the women from the diaspora were telling their own stories through teaching, empathizing and interaction with the new immigrant women and right after, the actors identified with each other through introspection and self-reflection. The team and I started to see a glimpse of hope in the new immigrant women around the end of phase one of the project. To be more specific, it was an attitude change as the new immigrant women were more talkative, and started to voice how important the program was to them while admitting to me and the team that they would like to continue participating in the program.

Method of evaluation 2

I proposed for my second Goal that I would try to help the women appreciate their cultural heritage. If everything goes well, the second phase of the project will begin in May 2013. Goal 2 Strategy 2:1- To teach Bible stories. I began a series of spiritual coordination steps with the participants such as engaging the people through reading of the scriptures, like the story of Job, Esther and the Israelites in bondage in Egypt in a foreign land, just like the immigrant Haitian women are living in a foreign land. The women were encouraged to pray the prayer of Jabez with more faith, as they called upon the God of Israel and the Holy Spirit for blessings and enlarging their border to keep them from harm. 1 Chronicle 1:10 they were encouraged about hope, faith and the promises of God that never fails. According to Job 5:16 “the poor have hope and injustice shuts its mouth.” I scheduled a series of conferences and lessons about Bible stories and asked the participants to talk about their own faith, their own belief and rituals. Although, the majority of the stakeholders have a Christian based faith, some of them still believe in their cultural religion, which has a lot of superstitious belief. One of the immigrant women who has a daughter who is practicing the craft (witchcraft) although she is a Christian she believes that her daughter can harm her with magic by controlling her. The teaching reemphasized to her God is greater than any other and his promise in Jeremiah 29:1 God has a plan for your future a plan to prosper his people. It was important for the participants to talk about their culture, the food they like the most, and their feeling about living in a new land, and what they are missing the most in their Haitian culture. Many of them talked about the specific food that they like such as: black rice, fried plantain, salt fish and black peas and how even the smell of those particular food propelled them back

to their youth, their ancestry and “the good old days.” They also talked about their family values even without much money yet, how their mother and their father used to protect them. I asked them “do they feel less of a human being because of being split apart with their rituals”? Some of them replied they lost the sense of community because of their living conditions and the place they are living now, the people around them, no one visits them or takes part in their daily lives in other words, and they are “lonely and disconnected.” As we were helping them to regain their faith, through specific Bible verses, the women needed to talk about their feelings, their sense of belonging, and what superstitious values that they believed in, if any? Which one did they prefer, since Haiti has different beliefs and rituals. Many of the immigrants prefer Christianity they said, but they also love their riddles, their folklore and their dance. “Our riddles represent the core of who we are; we are a unique kind of people.” The diaspora immigrant women engaged the participants with specific faith verses pertaining to their circumstances, and how to apply the word in prayer mostly at the beginning and ending of the meetings. The goal was for the participant immigrant women to be immersed in the word of God. The meetings had many challenges because the participants were not consistent for the most part. During the second phase, we had eight different participants coming at the table, some of them were new to the project and some others have been with us since the beginning of the project. One participant in particular was afraid to share her situation with the group; she and her spouse were going through a lot of financial difficulties, and make minimum wages. She lived in the US for about ten years, but because of the language barrier, she could not secure a good job and her husband who is a minister was not working at all. She has two sick children who are in constant need of help and

furthermore she ended up losing her house and lived with a family member who did not like her and her spouse. In light of all these situations, she refused to share her story with the group at the table because she did not trust any of us. One of the women from the diaspora helped her as much as she could not only monetarily but as well as hands on, traveled with her, picked her up from her place of residence to drive her to numerous activities. Meanwhile, there are other participants who liked the project. A case in point, one particular immigrant woman who lived in the U.S. for about six months and was pregnant was so happy about the program; she said “after the project is over, what is next?” I told her, taking a break. The participant was very clear about what she wanted to see happened as she said “please this is such a worthy cause, keep on investing in these women, this is a great program.”

Strategy 2:2 – to have Workshop with other women of faith. A series of conferences and workshops took place with other women of faith; they listened to the concerns of every individual and helped them with good advice to give them hope. A workshop was done on Jurgen Moltmann in his influential work published in 1967 was based on *Theology of Hope* such as: The resurrection of Jesus Christ, the promises of Christ, which is yet to come. The entire workshop based on the understanding that God is always ahead of us, and he is the one who will make all things new, no matter the chaotic confrontation of society, cultural disconnect, the pain and the lack of financial security. The only security they have is Jesus. All else are sinking sands including the foundations of empires.

The need of the people was to be identified as they are connected with each other through prayer and action of love. The women were to be encouraged to meditate on the

scriptures and to create cell groups of prayer. Many of the women meditated on Jeremiah 29:1 about the promises of God and the plan of God to give them a future. Last but not least, to memorize a verse identifying their needs, concerns and gives meaning and hope to their situations. I have seen the women being encouraged as they repeat in numerous situations Jeremiah 29 verse with meaning attached to it. Strategies one, two and three were all inculcated as one during the workshops. It was important that the participant immigrant women experienced the Bible stories at the same time reflecting on them remembering them, acting upon them, talking about them, and recognizing the different problems they face, yet relating to each other and encouraging one another.

Strategy 2:3- Focus groups and conferences by June & July a series of focus groups took place, pamphlets about hope distributed to all the stakeholders, each individual had a turn to speak for thirty minutes about anything that came into their mind as they were being assessed and evaluated by another group to see how they were relating to each other; how much they talked about their own cultural heritage, their traditions. Is there hope in their conversations or how easy it is for them to talk about their personal lives? During that phase, I brought the videographer to videotape some of the new immigrant women as well as some of the immigrants from the diaspora with their own concerns and feelings. As the women were constantly encouraged to voice their concerns, their opinions, their reflections, they were reminded to take the lead and interact with one another. In the last part of the session, the women were encouraged to take part in the following Sunday service at Bethel Church to be in a loving environment and being part in the church community.

Method of evaluation 3

I proposed for my third and last goal to help the women acquire skills and techniques that will promote strength and support. By August 2013, the team and I were ready to continue with the project.

Goal 3 Strategy 3:1 was to increase verbalization skills and promote self-disclosure through storytelling. A series of skills and techniques that would promote strength and support was assigned to the immigrant women, and also helped them learn techniques that would support each other. The women were taught how to build their communal skills and organizational skills through respect and trust; they will talk about their stories with hope for the future, while the staff from the media will be encouraged to keep records for further evaluation. The immigrant women watched a series of documentary films depicting every aspect of human suffering and famine. Together the new immigrant women and those from the diaspora sat together on the same table creating a new community. They shared meals together; told stories about themselves; laughed together; and at times, shared each other's suffering. They were very supportive of one another, even helping some of the new immigrants with some housing issues, translation problems and help with public assistance. The immigrant women from the diaspora felt so fulfilled helping the new immigrants that they became more enthusiastic about their own dreams as they remembered their humble beginnings and prophecies spoken over them. One particular team member from the diaspora said this project is the fulfillment of a prophecy about her own life. Many of the women from the project not only feel more comfortable but more open to talk and to share.

Strategy 3:2- to increase socialization and communication skills. The participants were placed together with mentors to acquire skills through mentorship, mentoring and workshop. Together they identified issues within the community that should be addressed such as networking of information to help the new immigrant access the system. To find a good community based church to help the new immigrant not only with prayer but also with a caring group of people who would teach them and providing a helping hand to them. A strategy and action plans for change was identified as a seed that can help each other engage the Spirit for hope, meaning to listen to each other and respect one another. The new immigrant women including those from the diaspora were encouraged to bond with at least one person from their community mostly from a faith-based Church through prayers and sharing. Some of the participants seemed a bit reluctant about sharing their personal situations with people from the church but some others seemed very hopeful and were ready to open up to something new. The participants were inspired to use a faith-based approach to resolve conflict, and to increase their communication skills. The team and I talked about strategies to become a good listener and to create respect for all, and to understand that solutions can be multifaceted. The motto is to respect one another as you would like to be respected. Before implementing strategy 3:3 the new immigrant women were inspired to talk about some of their issues and the women from the diaspora were excited to see the willingness of the immigrants.

Strategy 3:3- by September 2013 all the resources to help the immigrant women and to encourage them were already in place. The network between the diaspora immigrant women and the new immigrants were being established. The new immigrants had all the pertinent information such as telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of important

companies and team members. The women—mostly the women from the diaspora—were rehearsing how to tell their stories. Some new immigrants felt uncomfortable videotaping their stories because of lack of understanding, although some of their concerns were addressed. Some of the new immigrants gave me permission to tell an excerpt of their stories on camera, just so they could be more comfortable. The women were praying with more feeling and offered more thanksgiving prayer to the Lord as they were praying more often for their own needs and those of group. Part of their prayer was having a grateful heart to God, for allowing me to work on their behalf. Many of the immigrants called the group for help with their daily chores and the team addressed their problems as they offered them pertinent information. Some of the site team members from the diaspora were excited to tell their stories and to talk about their own experiences as the project was getting to a close.

Upon the completion of the program, it was time to evaluate the plan to determine if the strategies were working as intended. The site team and I will know if the goals have been either achieved, partially achieved or none achieved when comparing surveys, interviews, and qualitative data such as all the data collection from the field work strategies. During the investigation I will look for a changed response- through transformative conversation from both the new immigrant Haitian women and those from the diaspora. My strategy is to use behavioral observations—to find out how willing and empowered the immigrant women become; and if any of the women willingly accepted new information to help them hope for their future. How did these women relate that information to their needs and others? Did the immigrants become responsible in planning their own personal development? Have they showed willingness to pray, to

teach and to help others who are going through the same situation they are facing? And are they willing to forsake the “victim mentality attitude.” Are they still able to reminisce about Haiti and family values and all those left behind; and still remain hopeful to be reunited with their family someday as they regain their voices?

Some viable change is possible within 6 to 8 months if the women can achieved one of the basic ways types of Action.

- 1- Instrumental
- 2- Expressive
- 3- Moral ²⁹

The criteria for the evaluation would be “a behavioral observation in order to tangibly see” if the participants are able to regain hope, their own voices and are willing to cross the social segregation barrier between the women from the diaspora, who already have a profession, and they, who are hopeless and helpless; yet to show how serious they are open to learn and to have access to some of the resources at hands once they regain their voices.

I assembled a series of questions for survey questionnaires and put them to trial by doing a pilot testing according to Arlene Fink step-by-step guide to test the reliability and the validity of the survey.³⁰ Right before the program started, I asked a series of questions to some of the new immigrant women from Bethel Christian Church and saved their responses as data to be comparing later on. Then I administered the same sets of questions to the Haitian women from the diaspora. The test lasted for 15minutes and 15 questions were administered to the Haitian women face to face. This is a standard

²⁹ Joseph V. Crockett, “Mentor and Research Development” (Handout, March 19-23, 2013), 2.

³⁰ Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys*, 41.

procedure because everyone can collect information the same way. During the project the same survey questions were given a second time and I could see a reliability correlation between the results since they answered with the same behavioral attitudes. However, I could also see a glimpse of hope in the women's speech, behavior and attitudes after all the teaching, praying and mentoring sessions. So I can say that the outcome of my first proposition was partially met, as I see a glimpse of hope and strength from both groups of Haitian women. The new immigrant women were hopeful to see other Haitian women looking into their pain and suffering, and ready to help even though many of them are not able to speak the language; yet they become aware of some vital information that can help them during the project. The women from the diaspora were excited because the experience propelled them back to their humble beginnings as they were remembering their own stories and their own determination to achieve.

For my second set of propositions, the outcome was unclear because my proposition was to help the women appreciate their cultural heritage in order to feel they belong and to be rightly accepted by their own community. I realized that all throughout the model project meetings the new Haitian immigrant women never felt totally disconnected with their cultural heritage. As they were reminiscing about their cultural food and preferences, their folklore, riddles, songs, smell and how they missed home even though they may not have had many material possessions in Haiti but these were to them *le vieux bon temps*, the good old days. Therefore, the outcome of my second proposal remained unclear concerning cultural appreciation. On the other hand, the messages of the Bible, the prayer, focus group, the presentation of biblical stories with cultural messages reinforced the hope for both groups because the messages increased

their faith and strength. Hence, the outcome of my second proposition was also partially met. The women were hopeful, and were ready to help others in need as they accepted the new information.

For my final proposition the outcome was also partially met, the women were to acquire skills and techniques to promote strength and support and to help them display more about themselves and to tell their stories so they could reclaim their voices. The strategies were for the women to support one another so they can create new communities. Based upon behavioral observation through field data collection I identified more need for training; a need for trust; and a need for individual strength in order for the new immigrant women to reclaim their voices. Many of them were fearful to speak in front of the camera because of pride and lack of knowledge, thinking they might lose their public benefits. Furthermore, creating a new community is more like a distant outcome, a long-term outreach that can probably be accomplished in up to three to five years. However, the women from the diaspora came out and told their stories as they remembered their beginning and declared this visual model project as a movement to be continued. The team and I proposed to continue the meetings and the teaching at least once a month, and there was a consensus between the new immigrant Haitian women and those from the diaspora to continue participating in the project meetings, internship program for long term implication, which will lead ultimately in a change in individual behavior and community. The community already has several assets in place such as church community, religious group and communal services to increase more community engagement.

In the final analysis, partial positive outcomes were proximal— they were seen immediately following the implementation of the strategies such as 1) a glimpse of hope after the Bible teaching implementation. The bible stories were on point as the immigrant realized that God always has a plan for the people no matter what. 2) A glimpse of strength because the new immigrants felt love as the team and I were taking an interest in their plight and suffering and making them feel special. 3) I see some transformative hope at the end of the project as one particular new immigrant said “everyone should be willing and happy to partake in this program because it is a Godsend.” Although the outcome of the model project was partially met, and not totally transformative because more needs were identified for training, and those aspects from the project could only be a distal outcome with more training. However, it is possible for the new immigrant women to regain their voices and creating a new community. A case in point, one of the new immigrant women regained her voice and was not afraid of being interviewed on camera, felt very hopeful and open to a new season in her life. One month after the model project meeting was over she got married with a hopeful future and thanking God and the team for helping her look at life with a different lens, the lens of hope. As iron sharpens iron so does the spirit of men, because the spirit has different desires from the flesh, and ministry comes from the Spirit not the flesh. Therefore, I invite all the immigrant women and men to come join us at the table of love, where all are welcome at the table where miracles still happen. “God is the only head of this table.”

CHAPTER 7

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Process

In October 2013, the members of the site team and I had decided to meet at the site location that evening in order to complete the competency assessment forms. Although, it was a joint effort, as well as a time-consuming process the team members were very encouraging and sat down for more than two hours to complete the competency assessment forms. A summary of the site team's assessment of ministerial competencies and my assessment is as follow:

Theologian

Candidate demonstrates her competency and ability as relates to the Word in theological terms locally and in a much broader context. She also takes time to expound on the word theologically and brings it alive through her life experiences and life styles.

Preacher

Candidate has the ability to organized material effectively to assist others in better understanding the subject matter; she is capable in using appropriate language in delivering the message so that it caters to the people's understanding. She is also able to interpret the sacred scriptures, the symbols and parables in a meaningful and effective manner.

Worship Leader

The candidate is able to create and lead rituals and various forms of worship for any specific occasion or situation with leadership skill and professionalism. She also has the capability to liven up the ceremony in other for the Congregation to become an active participant in the worship.

Prophetic agent

The candidate is always ready to give open-minded advice to those who need it and a willingness to embrace risk in order to create social change, and she has a heart for injustice toward women's violence.

Leader

The candidate can benefit in improving her leadership skills. However she does possess the ability to motivate others to achieve their best efforts. Some attention is needed.

Religious Educator

The candidate has the ability to employ sound teaching methods appropriate to the community. She is very open and has the ability to prepare and communicate the subject matter in a clear hermeneutical fashion; she is able to rightly divide the text through exegesis.

Counselor

The candidate can work on improving her counseling skills although; she is very motivated in helping others and works through their difficulties and crisis. She is also a good communicator.

Pastor

The candidate highly excels in the ability to comfort and encourages those who are bereaved. She cherishes and encourages others with words of wisdom and genuine concerns. The candidate is a source of comfort.

Spiritual Leader

The candidate has proven to be an effective spiritual guide to those in their ongoing relationship to God. She has reached on a daily bases to thousands via words of encouragement and writings virtually. The candidate excels her attentiveness to the spiritual journey through the ongoing relationship with God.

Witness or Evangelist

The candidate is highly competent to communicate effectiveness inside and outside one's immediate community. She always seeks to ensure the future of the faith community and the integrity of her message.

Administrator

The candidate can benefit in improving on her administrative skills; however, she is a good organizer and effective in the ability to involve other persons in decision-making

Professional

The candidate demonstrates a positive professional attitude towards self and others. She demonstrates good listener skills and is a good communicator.

Competencies Chosen for Development

Three competencies were chosen for further development because some attention was needed to perfect these competencies. Although, I have held some leadership positions as far as singing, preaching and teaching, to create a model project I needed

more understanding on how to improve my leadership skills and how to delegate responsibilities, inspire the team, adopted a plan, know when to challenge the stockholders and to have the ability to lead without being bias.

Leadership: to delegate responsibilities and to learn how to appreciate all work without being biased or judgmental.

Strategies:

- I will create workshop strategies about leadership skills with the team
- Read pertinent books about leadership
- Serve as a liaison between the group, the community and the church
- In-service training in leadership

Evaluation:

- To enable others and guide them to accomplish their endeavor in a timely fashion.

My strategy for starters was to read pertinent books about leadership, so I could be effective not only in this endeavor but as well in my life and ministry. I began my journey looking into some interesting books. For starters I looked into *D.L. Moody on Spiritual Leadership* a book written by Steve Miller. This book talked about how Moody who was one of the most prominent evangelists and ministers of his day did not have the formal credentials expected of spiritual leaders, and no formal training. As a matter of fact, when he began to serve God he could barely read and write. His success came when he surrendered unreservedly his life to a God who is limitless and God can do extraordinary works through very ordinary people. According to Steve Miller, “Moody had the inner qualities that are absolutely essential in every Christian leader’s life. The right heart and the right attitudes and that made him wholly moldable clay in the hands of

the Master Potter. Consecrate and concentrate that is, total surrender and total focus and to be faithful.”³¹ So right from the start, I knew that in order to even think about becoming a good leader, one needs to totally surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Having the right heart and right attitude to allow him to direct me and to take control. This is the reason before starting the project the team and I met and invited the Holy Spirit to take control and to direct the project. Every step of the model project was directed toward God first, then the people. Although, I had to take control of the entire project because everyone was waiting for me to coordinate all the efforts in order to have great results. When things were unclear everyone was waiting for directives from me. I called for a leadership training session like “action-centered leadership” so all of us could move in unison towards the same goal, without leaving anyone behind. According to John Adair,

Leadership exists on three broad levels such as: strategic, operational and team. The secret of business success is *excellence of leadership at all three levels*” and it is important to invite the people you are working with to join you on a journey of discovery what leadership is all about and help them to understand.³²

And because leadership has so many different dimensions and depths, in the training I tried to keep it simple for the participants using the three uphill paths from the book. How to grow leaders: The Seven key principles of effective leadership 1) the qualities approach (what a leader has to be) 2) the situational approach (What a leader has

³¹ Steve J, Miller, *D.L. Moody on Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody), 12.

³² John Adair, *How to Grow Leaders: The Seven Key Principles Of Effective Leadership Development* (London: Kogan Page, 2005), 141.

to know) 3) and the group or Functional approach (What a leader has to do) and in the final analysis the distinguish quality of a leader is confidence.³³

My strategies were to create workshop strategies about leadership skills with the team; I had several meetings with the team about how we needed to move towards our goals and although the team and I had many challenges, I had to be confident, persistent and reluctant knowing who I am, what I needed to accomplish and how to go about it. I also had to serve as a liaison between the group, the community and the church because I had to coordinate everything. Although the team helped with the teaching the leadership delegating responsibilities were mine to do. I had deadlines to meet and I was not going to let challenges stop me from ending the meeting on time and miss guiding the stakeholders away from the transformative experience.

After the project was ended, I asked a written request from a team member, for assessment purposes. Then on December 12, 2013 Evangelist Myrta Herold sent me the written evaluation about my skills.

I, Evangelist Myrtha Herold one of the Team Members for the project “ Haitian Women Remembering the Immigrant Experience” am delighted to present my View about Rev. Herard in the following areas 1) Leadership, 2) Credibility and 3) Ministerial.

Connecting with the standard of excellent leadership ability, I personally applaud Reverend Herard for her leadership competency while working together in this project. As a leader, she shows signs of knowing how to develop a focus idea. For example, from the beginning of the preparation of the project, she prepared the team members by sharing her expectations, intent, and her mission by choosing this particular title. She

³³ Ibid., 188.

established a healthy relationship between both the team members and the participants through open discussions. She valued everyone's input and showed appreciation for each comment.

In terms of decision making, Rev. Herard knows how to apply different techniques by taking the necessary action to provide strength to both the team members and the participants from the diaspora and the new immigrant women. She has the ability to recognize the difference between a normal and abnormal approach to a situation. Her interaction with the team members reflects competency and this provides better understanding and experience to both the team members and the participants.

As a leader, Rev. Herard knows when and how to approach a troubled situation. She structures open communication between the team members with an open mind to find a solution. In addition, in order to prevent conflict, Rev. Herard shows respect to all as she assures and maintains a clear explanation for any changes. She focuses on the positive rather than the negative. She has been very generous in terms of rearranging the schedule for meetings in order to help each team member who is participating accordingly. She also demonstrates active preparedness throughout the entire model project by practicing self-discipline. These qualifications identify Rev. Herard as an excellent leader.

I was very inspired by Rev. Herard's credibility, as she shows a great deal of competence when answering questions concerning the project, especially in the area of understanding the need of the new immigrant participants. Along the way, I discovered that she serves each of the participants with honesty as she applied her own immigrant experience. She also shows interest in understanding about their situation in the United

States because she is aware that they need to feel welcome, important, connected, belong and most of all they need to be adapted to the new environment.

Rev. Herard viewpoints are not based on fairytales, but rather on the reality of life, including: providing the participants skills, techniques, and teaching them survival skills, to help them learn how to navigate the system so they can make wise decisions for life transformation. She knows how to approach the stakeholders with enough caution and words of comfort so the immigrant women can feel special enough and feel that their voices are important to society. In addition, she teaches the participants how to appreciate and accept their own culture and other cultures.

One of the remarkable exploits Rev. Herard did is in handling a difficult time during the project. She was very diplomatic, when confronting with a financial situation created by the videographer. She had a verbal contract at first with a fixed price, and then gradually the price increased and created a very difficult conflict among the entire team, more so with Rev. Herard. The videographer used a lot of accusatory words towards Rev. Herard and I observed how wisely she handled the situation by establishing a written contract to prevent additional increase.

Her attitude in coping with pressure is incredible, for instance some of the immigrant participants had stopped coming to the project meeting because of fear, instead of being discouraged about the obstacles, and she considered other ways to come up with new ideas. From my own opinion, I realized that one of Rev. Herard stronger points is to teach the immigrants that they have other alternatives to better themselves, as she is helping them on how to reach their full potential so they can make their voices heard. And I have seen perceptions and behaviors changes concerning the participant's

situations. In terms of ministerial criteria, Rev. Herard presents the gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of engaging the word of God on point. For the past two years, once a month she has been faithfully preaching at Bethel Christian Church located in Brooklyn, New York. She is an anointing preacher, a dynamic teacher and a fantastic councilor. I found Rev. Herard to be an anointed preacher because of the fruits of the messages bringing many to the Lord. Her dynamic teaching helped me learned a lot from her, and also helped me change my attitudes in a positive way. Besides me, I have heard other testimonies about her and seen transformation in many attitudes.

Last but not least, Rev. Herard is also a fantastic counselor. I observed her capacity to listen to others and responded accordingly to their needs as she helped the counselee reach a positive conclusion. She has the wisdom and the discernment to recognize confusing spirit and respond appropriately; whether through praying or using the word of God. Rev. Herard always invested voluntarily more time to pray with the congregants at the end of the service to all who need prayer and counseling. I am also thrilled to see how Rev. Herard dedicated so much of her time to attend to different situations of the participants, and knows just what to say to make them feel comfortable and to produce strength and hope.

I witnessed one of the participants who had fear of sharing about her personal struggles, when Rev. Herard surprised her, when she openly shared her own story. She is definitely a positive channel that provided words of knowledge and I also believe that her continuous stability performances reflect positive results and testimonies as she is impacting lives of many during the process of this model project. Rev. Herard remained focused on her primary goal “To help the new immigrant women to reclaim their voices

and the immigrant women from the diaspora to regain their memories.” Sure enough, regardless all the hardships she endured, she reached her goal. Therefore, my overall remark about Rev. Herard leadership, credibility and ministerial services is outstanding and well recommended.

Counselor: to always accept the counselee without being biased, and to aid in spiritual healing even in difficult moral circumstances.

Strategies:

- Be an advocate
- Be a good listener
- Provide guidance
- Establish group relationships

Evaluation:

Request a written evaluation from the team after individual group session.

Another competency that I chose for further development is counseling because some attention was needed in this area, and the purpose of choosing this competency, is to be more attentive to others in need, by practicing the art of listening: such as quick to listen with attentiveness, slow to speak, and slow to anger. My research experience taught me that listening is an art and a biblical principle because listening is not only passive but also active and one needs to make an active effort covered with love and compassion to walk every step the needy take as you would do unto yourself. Listening is opening up your heart, mind, and emotions so you can see what the other person sees, hear what the other person hears and understand what the other person is going through. Listening is not solely audible but as attentive, mindful and heeding to a much greater power of the heart. Another of my strategies was to be an advocate for the participants, although as a

registered nurse/minister this is a part of my job to be done on a daily basis. Especially for those that are emotionally and physically unable to fight for themselves because of sickness or lack of family support. A registered nurse is trained to empathize with those who are in dire need of help, to stand for them and access systemic information on their behalf because they are not in position to do for themselves. One of my strategies therefore, was to reinforce the information that I already knew and used them in conjunction with the new immigrant women's plight. During the model project, I found myself helping the immigrant women not only on how to regain hope, but as well, inviting them to sit with us in the circle of love, showing them that the team and I truly cared for them. I participated in their suffering by listening to them attentively; was an advocate for them, defended them, searched for pertinent information to help them, advised them and prayed for them.

My third strategy was to provide guidance to the people, because a good counselor always has a good positive and beneficial advice to give. The women were there in the meetings with me, new immigrants as well as women from the diaspora and they needed guidance. They were willing to experience new hope, new strength, and new community. Some to regain their voices and others to remembering their immigrant experience but nevertheless, they needed someone to teach them, hold their hands and to show them the love of God and community all together. I become the hands and feet of Jesus to the immigrant women. My last strategy was to establish the group's relationship and it was not an easy task because of people's social status and their trust issues. Family therapist Barbara Dan's *Power to Choose* says that in order to "cultivate an awareness of what is going on around you, don't set aside your own feelings or deny the truth of what

has happened, but remember isolating yourself from others who share your pain will only prolong it and may cause rifts and misunderstandings that can never be mended. Reach out to one another.”³⁴ More often, many choose isolation over trust because of the comfort level; isolating yourself from sharing your pain can only prolong your suffering. The best way to care and to advise someone is by reaching out to one another and being active in that life.

For Evaluation, Evangelist Myrta Harold has sent a written evaluation mentioning the voluntary time I invested in the life of the congregants in the church, through prayers and counseling.

Administrative: To organize effectively and to establish realistic goals

Strategies:

- Assigning tasks.
- Effective service delivery
- Ensured goals met timely
- Ability to oversee site teams.

Evaluation:

- Involved team in the decision making process and to keep me accountable for the timeline, in order to meet my deadline in a timely manner.

The last competency I chose for further development is Administrative. For any corporate body or project there must be an administrative body to take responsibility and be accountable to. Assignments need to be assigned; protocol needs to be followed; goals have to be met in a timely fashioned; and a comfortable environment for productivity

³⁴ Barbara Dan and John Dan, *Power To Choose True Stories of Tragedy And Triumph* (The Lakes: Eden Publishing, 1995), 185.

created. My tasks were not different from the administrative responsibilities because I had to assigned different positions to different groups. I had to learn how to be flexible at times, and other times I had to be strong without being biased and being too sensitive.

I had to take everything into consideration, not only the task at hand but the logistics and the time frame for completing the model project. Part of the strategy was to establish realistic goals and to be aware of the team as well as the group's personal values, biases and interests that can influence the outcome of the project. I had to ensure that the goals were well-planned and they are plausible and able to be completed in a timely fashioned. Throughout the entire six months length of the meetings, many challenges arose from all sort of thematic patterns. I had to make use of concepts, be aware of casual inferences, not be biased, but to have the right ability to oversee the site team and new immigrant women's social location.

The site team kept me accountable through recording the minutes of the meetings, reviewing the project meetings once a week, reminding me of important follow-up through external agencies, and by sending me short and detailed notes for reminders.

In light of the strategies used for administrative development, my site team and I can definitely say that we aimed for objectives as we engaged personal, social, human identity for those who are culturally dislocated and marginalized. All these factors help the team and I discover that making meaning is always transformative, especially when these factors are well managed.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, my project is all about human identity and conflict—personal, social, cultural dislocation and oppression. My main objective was to make meaning around the differences and the dislocation of others, who have been forgotten in an evil structural system.

Secondly, my aim is to engage the Bible through the lens of the “Other” in a meaningful way to look for transformation if possible. Everyone has a story to tell and everyone has the need to be acknowledged and to be loved.

Professor Colin J. Greene quoted an Australian Aboriginal proverb in one of his lectures given at the NIDA Institute that says: “Without a story to tell, you have no songs to sing, no dreams to fulfill and no hope for your time.”³⁵ Jesus died to set the world free, so they can have hope, fulfill their dreams and sing songs of the night. The recipients of that hope need to use their availability to create missions of hope. And only the Lordship of Jesus Christ inspires such mission.

The classic spiritual text in the Bible about hope is Luke 4:18 the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. Jesus is at the

³⁵ Collin J. Greene, “The Art of Bible Engagement: Employment and Empowerment” (paper presented at the NIDA Institute for Biblical Scholarship, Biblical Engagement D.Min. Program, New York, March 19, 2013).

base of freedom for the oppressed, my motto is “If I try and fail, I will try harder” because only those who are persistent can get emotional, physical or financial satisfaction. “Only what we do for Christ will last” as I set out goals for my life, I achieved some, got challenged in others and failed in some other areas. Nevertheless, I will try again because the cause is worth the fight. Transformation can be short-term; while other outcomes depend on a long-term journey and still the nature of some other challenges may never be clear. Human beings need to remember their milestones and have strength and hope so they can have a voice to speak and a song to sing. James H. Harris said:

In order for an individual or a society to be liberated and ultimately transformed, that individual or group need first to understand that liberation means that his or her thoughts and actions are not simply a reflection of the thoughts of others but rather of the ability to think and do for oneself.³⁶

Liberation was always an autonomous act; someone has to want to be changed and wants to choose freedom instead of bondage in order to be liberated. The process is not always easy because there are many challenges to overcome—social, political, cultural and financial. Nevertheless, it can be done.

The new immigrant Haitian women needed to be heard, and to have someone who will listen to them and give them hope. They needed empathy and a helping hand to help them develop and be all they could be. This could be one of the reasons why the project meant so much to them. Not only did this project give them hope but it also made them feel special, because someone was truly and genuinely taking an interest in their misery and plight. They felt loved and hopeful, as they made a place in their hearts for the

³⁶ James H. Harris, *Preaching Liberation* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 8.

Haitian women immigrant from the diaspora. They wanted to learn something new, acquire skills that could help them access important information, and they needed encouragement to regain their voices.

Consequently, these women allowed themselves to be part of the world of the bible, in order to be plotted in the biblical story just like in Leviticus 26:45 “but I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord.” These women understood that their hope comes from the promises of God, as he is moving his servants in partnership with different agencies—the church, educational and societal organization to create new communities.

This model project helped me to have a much broader perspective on the passage of the Good Samaritan Luke 10: 30-37. A man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. A priest was going down that same road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But, a Samaritan, as he journeyed came to where he was, 1) and when he saw him, he has compassion, 2) he went to him, 3) and bound up his wound, 4) pouring up oil and wine 5). Then he set him on his own animal 6) and brought him to an inn, and took care of him 7). And the next day he took out two denarii 8) and gave them to the innkeeper, saying “take care of him, and whatever more you spend; I will repay you when I come back.” Which one proved to be the neighbor said Jesus? This passage in the bible opened my eyes on how the word of God becomes flesh, blood and nourishment to those in need in order to bring transformation. The ministry of helping is not superficial

but nurturing and sustainable to foster encouragement and aid in the development of change. One of my objectives is Bible engagement; the Bible must come alive not only for me but for those in need. The word becomes flesh and blood; the word challenges the world; and only with the word a change will occur through a paradigm shift in the lives that are open to allow meaning to happen in a transformative way.

Consequently, I was challenged as a ministerial consultant of the plight and suffering of the new Haitian immigrant women who lost their voice because they are living in America in a new land, having a language barrier and are not able to access the basic network system. These women suffered an abrupt disconnection from their social/cultural life in their own community; they needed to build awareness about their own personal experiences and acquired skills and technique, and relearned on how to appreciate their own heritage and traditions.

One of my primary propositional goals was to wed the Haitian women newcomers with those Haitian women from the diaspora because such a marriage could prove to be beneficial for both groups. One group will regain their voices, as the group is being strengthened, becoming more skillful, and hopeful through storytelling. On the other hand, the diasporan group will remember their stories, once they are engaging the new immigrant group with empowerment stories through the word of God and wisdom and faith.

Looking into the women's cultural disassociation, my proposal's goal was to emphasize practices, techniques, teaching and positive behavior that could help the women experience empowerment and hope. I hermeneutically engaged the Bible with the

women to bring the text in a humanistic, personal, social human way, so it will allow transformation to those who are dislocated and marginalized.

In the final analysis, part of my propositional outcome had some significance, which I considered huge; and this is the part where a slight contribution to this project applies, like a new knowledge if you will—*nurturing will bring transformation* although in reality it is not a new knowledge because there is really nothing new under the sun. The new immigrant women and the women from the diaspora were sitting together at the table of love sharing a meal, sharing a thought, sharing love and concerns for each other. Nobody could deny the feelings of paranoia were shifting into a beautiful tapestry, whereas layers of helplessness were being removed one by one, stories of hopelessness were getting more empowered with hope because feelings mattered. Just like the Good Samaritan who really did not have any business to be close to this man from Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he bypassed cultural and societal barriers to bring wholeness to someone in dire need of help.

The Good Samaritan story is a typical example of how the ministry of helping should be a loving, compassionate and sustainable experience. It cannot be a superficial experience because it will not produce transformation. There is always a consequence following the way someone is treated—whether positive or negative. My proposed outcome of the project was that transformation is more than contributory; it is discursive, logical, meaningful, engaging, nurturing, and sustainable while living in the world of the text. Plato once said “those who have torches will hand them on to others” as the Lord hands the torches of help, hope and love to me, I am handing it, to all those who are

reading this project and may the ministry of help and love find you, as it will help you,
help others and become a beacon on your own personal journey.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

HAITIAN WOMEN REMEMBERING THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

By

GHISLAINE HERARD

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT PROPOSAL

New York Theological Seminary

2013

Challenge Statement

As a ministerial Consultant from Bethel Church in Brooklyn NY, I have observed the segregation between the newly arrived Haitian Immigrant and the women from the diaspora on the basis of social class, despite sharing a common origin story. With the help of the site team and others, I will establish a model project focusing on encouraging both to share their stories: for the immigrant women to reclaim their voices and for the women of the diaspora to reclaim their memories.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SETTING

The church community should be an organization dedicated to God first and then the poor, the suffering, the destitute, the outcast, the foreigners and the immigrants. The church should strive to strengthen the community and to empower the congregants through leadership development skills, training programs and to help them develop their natural abilities, talents and resources. However, such a task is not easy if those in dire need of help are poorly adjusted—specifically lacking harmony with their social and cultural environment because of not having a voice. Although challenging, the church community is also aware God only needs one dedicated man or woman to deliver millions from slavery to freedom.

The beloved City was in ruins, its gates burned down, and its walls destroyed. Without walls the city had no security, no protection from the enemies. Nehemiah asked what was on his heart. ‘How are my people? How are the Jews?’¹

Nehemiah, who has a calling in his life, was ready through prayers and experiences as he prepared himself to understand his destiny and the mind of God. He knew that he had to face many challenges as he asked himself “Who is God? He is the God of Heaven. Who are we? We are the servants of God. What is the Crisis at hand? The City gates are in

¹ Mack Pier and Katie Sweeting, *The Power Of A City At Prayer* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 107.

ruins.”² Nehemiah was a cupbearer of King Artaxerxes I of Persia, by whom he was appointed governor of Judah about 445 BCE, and because he was so grieved at the desolation of the city and for the laws of God of Judah, God supplied the heart of the King and enabled him to restore the walls of Jerusalem.

THE PROBLEM

Bethel Christian Church is a home-based church, fairly new in the community and located in Brooklyn NY, approximately one and half miles away from Flatbush Avenue. The neighborhood is multicultural and with nearly one quarter of its population of Haitian descent. They encompass a wide range of different social and economic backgrounds. According to New York Times.com most came in search of cheap rent—which runs around \$400 per month. Flatbush Diaries says: “it is the most ethnically, culturally and economically diverse neighborhood in a little town called Brooklyn—the ‘Melting pot.’”³

Bethel Christian Church has a low membership and a high level of newly-arrived Haitian immigrants among the majority of the members. And because they are newly arrived in the country, lack a support network in the community, and are in dire need of help, we as ministers have an obligation to help them. We are fearful that we are probably not equipped to help them. However, the ministers of the church have taken notice of the problem and want to do be part of the solution. Howard Thurman said, “When the basis of such fear is analyzed, it is clear that it arises out of the sense of isolation and helplessness in the face of the varied dimensions of violence to which the underprivileged

² Mack Pier and Katie Sweeting, *The Power*.

³ <http://flatbushdiaries.wordpress.com> (accessed February 11, 2013).

are exposed.”⁴ And because the task is complicated—cultural, social and economic issues differences are large—the immigrant first of all needs to understand their stories and reclaim their voices. I desire to see a positive change and a paradigm shift, where the disinherited will be empowered. The foundational empowerment starts by creating a safe place for the new immigrants and those women in the diaspora to reclaim their lost voices and their memories.

The pastor of Bethel Christian Church was born in Haiti as a conscientious Christian; he wants to help the community, to be *de bloke*—to be delivered from traditional restraints and maladjustment; to be free to make choices as minorities, free from traditional restraints, free from spiritual servitude such as serving other gods that could be a snare to them. Looking at his struggles to grow the church and to help ease the lack of communal cooperation, propelled me to take an even greater interest in helping my community—especially the women—to reclaim their voices and to remember their stories. Such task will be done through mentoring, teaching, empowering techniques and much prayer to guide and enable the women to stand up on their own two feet.

My observation of the challenge is focused around the young Haitian adult women, who lost their voices, their stories and inspiration. For example, I know a newly arrived Haitian immigrant woman who went to live with her brother. However, her own brother told her that in order to live with him she would have to babysit his children and to become his maid because this is the rule of the country. This young woman, disappointed and no longer recognizing her own brother fell into despair. She lost her

⁴ Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 37.

voice as a woman. So many of Haitian immigrants suffered with cultural dissociation and felt deceived by society. Dr. Proskauer said:

When a person or a culture attempts to plunge entire realms of experience so deeply into the shadows that their very existence is denied, we have a problem akin to dissociation. Denial of the karmic energetic and transcendent dimensions in the mainstream culture and especially in the scientific world can be so extreme as to look like a cultural dissociative disorder.⁵

These women are not able to comprehend the mainstream language and are not able to provide for their children. Thus, they cannot assume the leadership position for their family. Haitian women's homes are culturally structured, for the most part, in such a way as to nurture their family with emotional support and love. This challenge gave me an incentive to follow up with Pastor Herold and to have several small discussion groups with him. During the course of our meetings, we identified the immigrant issues and concerns. Together, we talked about a proposed intervention for the community. As we focused on a motto quoted directly from the bible: Mark 12:30 (NLT) "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and your all your strength" and "love your neighbor as yourself." Once the neighbor is defined, then one's moral obligation is clear⁶

The pastor and I realized that some of the Haitian immigrant women in the community may not come from the same religious tradition as the members of Bethel and may not understand the passage of Mark 12:30 on how to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. However, since genuine love chases all fears away, and love is the most powerful weapon that propels strong positive emotion in every human being

⁵ Stephen Proskauer, "Integrative Psychiatry," <http://www.karmashrink.com/2011/07/21/cultural-dissociation> (accessed January 31, 2013).

⁶ Thurman, 89.

individually or collectively, I am willing to engage with the new immigrant through teaching the word, the promises, and the love of God that gives voice and hope to the hopeless and the helpless. If I applied the neighbors' commandment in Mark 12:30 "Love your Neighbors as yourself," in reality, who are truly my neighbors? The one who I can see, touch, feel and who are in my close proximity.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The church is located at 885 East 34th Street, Brooklyn NY, 11210. I thought Bethel Christian church was completely isolated in the private neighborhood where it is located. However, circling 2 miles around the church, North, South, East and West, I realized the richness of that neighborhood and the multicultural functions and activities that actually take place there. This revelation opened to me a world of opportunity for the immigrant to be connected with others. A number of creative and cultural businesses are within a quarter mile.

The neighborhood is a combination of religious groups: Evangelical Protestant denominations, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus. According to the 2010 Census the neighborhood has an average income per household of \$42,967. The population is made up of 21,252 whites; 36,865 blacks, of which 16,028 are Haitian; 4,929 Hispanics; 2,575 Asians. The male population count is 28,616 with a median age of 31.50 years; female population count is 33,992 and median age is 36.20 years; the median age for the population is 34.10 years.⁷

According to the center of immigration studies, the last census Bureau data

⁷ US Census Bureau, QuickFacts, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36047.html> (accessed February 11, 2013).

(2008) indicates there are 546,000 foreign-born Haitians in the United States that is up from 408,000 in 2000 and 218,000 in 1990. They believe that their best estimation is that, there are 75,000 to 125,000 illegal Haitian Immigrants in the country. In 2000 the INS estimated there were 76,000 illegal Haitian Immigrants.⁸ Haitian immigrants and their young children under 18 years living in poverty is 20%, compared to native born and their young children at 11.6%⁹

FOCUS SITUATION

After circling the church neighborhood, I have decided once again, to have another meeting with the Pastor and church administration. In July 2012, I met with them and my main purpose for this meeting was to get more information about the history of Bethel Christian Church. Although, I am a consultant in the church and one of the ministers who teaches every 4th Sunday of each month, I am not a member of the church. My multifaceted ministry takes me to different churches and ministries such as: singing, counseling, preaching almost every Sunday. The pastor and his wife received me in the conference room and they were happy to speak with me because they need capable hands to help them with the issue at hand, empowering the people. We talked about different avenues to get there and also understand that it is not going to be an easy task to create a safe space for the women so they can reclaim their voices and be emancipated.

In the view of Rev. Stanley J. Lemon those who help in the ministry of the Church, should have certain qualities and primary requisites for a good church: friendliness, vision, humility, calmness, flexibility, reverence, kindness, submissiveness,

⁸ Steven A. Camarota, "Facts Sheet on Haitian Immigrants in the United States," <http://www.cis.org/immigrantsStateResidency> (accessed 8/21/2012).

⁹ Ibid.

graciousness, informed, neat, sensitive, poised, dependable, and dedicated. These qualities may be cultivated by encouragement from pastors and staff through feedback, prayers and love¹⁰.

Bethel Christian Church is an interdenominational nonprofit organization affiliated with Disciples of Christ Inc. which is an international missionary group involved in planting churches. My first question to pastor Herold was how long has he been trying to grow the church so he can help the greater number of immigrant to be empowered with the word of God and to help them to be ‘*de bloke*’ to help them to be delivered from cultural, social, spiritual and financial oppression. Pastor Herold was not hesitant to tell me about the church history and the many challenges that he has been facing. According to pastor Herold, he tried to grow the church numbers for a little over four years. He explained to me that his primary intention was never a home based church. However, because of the financial problems and the low membership left him with no other choice but to locate the church to his private house.

Some experts say: that ‘house church’ is part of a fundamental shift in the way U.S. Christians think about church. Skip the sermons, costly church buildings and large faceless crowds, they say. House churches are about relationships forged in small faith communities.¹¹ Although, the experts’ ideas may not be entirely expressed in pastor Herold’s plan for his church, he passionately explained the positive and the negative side of having a home based Church. On the one hand, it does appear to be more economical and less stressful at the end of the month when it is time to pay the mortgage and utilities.

¹⁰ David R. Enlow, *Church Usher: Servant of God* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publication 2003), 45.

¹¹ Carl Gehring, “House Churches Keep Worship Small, Simple, Friendly,” *Usatoday.com*, <http://www.usatoday30.usatoday> (accessed February, 2, 2013).

Following this further, he goes on to say that he incurred a huge electrical bill monthly because, he has a broadcasting radio in his house. On the other hand, the members expect him to be available 24/7 since he is always home. Pastor Herold continued to explain that he began the church endeavor in a rental facility in Brooklyn, NY located on President Street with more than seven prospective leaders who had already made a name for themselves in the Haitian Community.

They commenced this effort with a revival meeting for about seven days, and the theme for the revival was “A Life-Changing Opportunity for all” and the biblical engagement verse was (Exodus 3:7-8). “God says: I have seen the affliction of my people, I have heard their cry and I have come down to deliver them, so therefore, let us go to Bethel and cross to the other side to meet with our maker, our healer and our deliverer!”

According to Pastor Herold’s story, the revival went well at first, and they had a very good response all throughout the services, but it was short-lived basically, because of a lack of cooperation among those already established leaders and the new leaders.

Upon asking the pastor about his vision for the church and the community, I could hear the passion in his voice and see the enthusiasm in his face for his community. His primary vision is to build a global ministry, which will impact the lives of everyone who God will lead to the church. Thus, this vision requires him and the staff to do a massive outreach to many in the Haitian community; through volunteering, and with those who shared the same vision about the community to see them ‘*de bloke*’ using communal broadcast radio, pamphlets, words of mouth, and even educational skills. Thus, they need improved facilities and capital for broader outreach ministries.

Pastor Herold believes the vision of the church with God's help who strengthens them can be accomplished, for they are called to help the needy and to bring justice to the defenseless through prayer and action. Ryan J. Pelton says in his book *Gospel Driven Leadership, The 5 non-negotiables for leading like Jesus* are: Marinate the gospel; forgive others; serve others; pray; and work hard. To put it simply, it is to be a gospel-centered leadership, to help leaders bring the gospel back to the center of their influence.¹²

At the time of the interview with pastor Herold, they were under contract for a \$3.5million facility located in Brooklyn, New York. It was their first campaign for Bethel Disciples and it was also their first major fundraising effort. The effort crumbled because of lack of funds and cooperation. In our dialogue, we talked about ministry and how the ministers need to focus on the ministry of teaching, preaching, and reaching others for Christ through love as Jesus Christ had taught us. However, membership kept on decreasing until they could no longer continue to rent because of the financial hardship.¹³ After the interview, I felt a sense of sadness and urgency for this community.

My word of encouragement for the Pastor and the church was not to be discouraged and not to despair because God cares about the church and the few members they still have. I know in my heart, I will follow up with the ministry because the church is at a critical stage where there is a high level of pain and stress. As I quoted the word of Rev. Dr. Neil Mosser for comfort "One of the ways to understand preaching is that at the homiletically moment one human being offers words publicly that offers shapes to

¹² Ryan J. Pelton, *Gospel Driven Leadership: 5 Non Negotiables For Leading Like Jesus*" (n. p.: Pastorpelton.com, 2012), 27.

¹³ Bethel Church, *Bethel Christian Church Pamphlet, 2007 Annual Report: Let's go to Bethel* (Brooklyn New York: Disciples of Christ, 2007).

another person's human's experience. In other words good preaching offers a slant on life in a spoken form."¹⁴

¹⁴ David Neil Mosser, "When the Word of the Gospel is Heard," *The Living Pulpit: Dedicated to The Art of the Sermon* 16, no.4 (October- December 2007), 18.

CHAPTER 2

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:

Challenge Statement

As a ministerial Consultant from Bethel Church in Brooklyn NY, I have observed the segregation between the newly arrived Haitian Immigrant and the women from the diaspora on the basis of social class, despite sharing a common origin story. With the help of the site team and others, I will establish a model project focusing on encouraging both to share their stories: for the immigrant women to reclaim their voices and for the women of the diaspora to reclaim their memories.

A Woman's Story: An upper middle class Haitian woman named Marie, lived with her husband and her two young girls in Haiti. Marie is a physician, and she had established her own business in Haiti for decades. She is financially secure and well-known in Haiti for her medical skills. She's established her own medical office in Haiti for the community. She has two daughters, and she is well respected because of her dedication and her love for the community.

Marie was not a stranger to New York City; she traveled often here, to purchase top of the line office furniture in order to provide the best care for her clients in the affluent neighborhood where she practiced.

Mary suffered a terrible divorce with her spouse of 20 years, and immediately following her divorce her social status went downhill. She felt that her only remedy in order to get back on her feet was to leave Haiti and to live here in the USA. Marie could not secure a place to stay, and she had to place her two daughters with an acquaintance temporarily, until she is able to find her own place. Marie has a brother who lives in

Brooklyn; apparently they are estranged from each other. Marie lived with a friend in Connecticut, while her daughters lived somewhere in Brooklyn with acquaintances.

Marie became completely disconnected from her social background and felt lost completely in the system. She felt culturally, spiritually and economically destabilized because she lost her voice as a woman, even though she is a professional. Because she is a new immigrant in the country and was unable to access her community the way she used too in Haiti, she felt isolated. She felt that she must learn a different set of behavioral symbols that will reinforce her sense of community and lessen her sense of cultural disassociation by reclaiming her value; her strength through empowerment techniques; to feel safe again through her community.

She felt that she underwent ‘operant conditioning’ the changes that occurred in her learned behavior because of loss of hope, values and positive view in the system.¹⁵ She lost her inspiration, her self- pride and she needs to reclaim her voice and her narrative story. Furthermore, my informant goes on to say that Marie secured a job as a home attendant until she is able to better understand English. When her language skills improve, she will attempt to take the medical license board.

This story is only an example of the Haitian immigrant women’s plight living in America without a voice, without a basic network of support, and having a language barrier. The story illustrates how the young adult Haitian women are struggling to reclaim their stories while struggling under poor living arrangements. Mary felt abandoned and left all alone to fend for herself and her two daughters. Mary needs something such as a

¹⁵ Peter Kivisto, *Social Theory: Roots and Branches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 274.

“symbolic behavior, a social approval so she can do something interesting, reclaiming her narrative story.”¹⁶

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CHALLENGE

Mary’s story epitomizes the pivotal importance of the challenges facing the young adult Haitian immigrant women living in a foreign land. And because of such dilemmas, I plan to address the challenges. The challenges will be address through different means, such as: storytelling, Multimedia presentation, a moment of remembrance of their narrative story, reflection on their present circumstances, awareness about their values and their life experiences. Also the Haitian women will learn empowerment techniques, good biblical stories to shape their positive views and leadership skills to help create positive resources. Such challenges will need an organizational model to help the practitioner in this endeavor. Examining the view of Harrison’s ‘open systems models’—an organizational model that helps the practitioner diagnose problems effectively, to help gather data, prepare feedback and decide what steps will help the client solve problems and enhance effectiveness.¹⁷

I will attempt to comprehend several key features of the model in question for diagnosis, planning, action and evaluation, as I will use Bethel Christian Church sites as a dynamic center for growth, learning, innovation and empowerment. Bethel Church is very much part of the process since the ethos of the church is identifying with the social/cultural clash, and the segregation the newly immigrants are facing now.

¹⁶ Mack Pier and Katie Sweeting, *The Power*, 275.

¹⁷ Michael Harrison, *Diagnosing Organizations: Methods, Models, and Processes* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 28.

The young Haitian women will not only be part of the data gathered as participants of this endeavor, but the building block of this project as well. These women are called to remember their narrative stories and to understand their present circumstances and to reclaim their voices so they can be better empowered.

Moreover, I will look into the sets of beliefs and values the young Haitian women hold collectively through rituals, riddles, symbols, folk songs, traditional stories and practices in order to explore and identify new behavioral techniques. In Matthew 25: 31 he talks about being a stranger in a strange land: being naked culturally, socially, and spiritually; being hungry and desperate; losing their stories and voices; being sick and in prison morally and physically; and being completely disconnected—they were segregated and left all alone to fend for themselves. The love of Jesus could not accept such abandonment, because he cares so much for the least of these that he trades places with them. Jesus said, “I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Matt 25:45 NIV).

The team and I will build a model to bring awareness about the challenges facing the young Haitian immigrant women in the community; and the team will address other questions about cultural disassociation, social dislocation, hopelessness and helplessness. The plan in the first place is to acknowledge the folk religion brought across the river with them. Even though it may not be based on Jesus Christ’s beliefs—these are their riddles, their folk songs, and their native stories. In order for these women to become empowered they must first reclaim their voices by remembering their narrative stories. Additionally, we will help these women through growing awareness, teaching,

conferences, preaching, and reflection in order to be strengthened and be accountable to themselves and the community.

Haitian professional women from the diaspora will be recruited as well as the new immigrant women. The site team and perhaps some of the church members will create a safe environment in order to help these women reconnect with their common origin story regardless of social class and economic status. Such efforts will help them surmount these challenges as they are reclaiming their own voices through remembering their past, their present narrative stories, building their future. Their voices will be heard, they will be inspired, and they will be empowered with hope as they connect with their professional counterparts in the diaspora.

One of the goals of this project is to bring these women out of their isolation and loneliness, and to bring them into their own community through empowerment techniques.

According to the National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights, "immigrant women are, more than ever, the gateway to improving their own lives and the lives of their families."¹⁸ Moreover, the immigrant women make many contributions and positive impacts on communities. Therefore, empowering the immigrant women through teaching will help them appreciate their own values, cultural heritage, and accept their own stories.

Changes are made in incremental steps; I propose to alleviate hopelessness and helplessness by modifying the outcome with strength and hope as those women developed the bond of love with a "sister keeper" to create a new story.

¹⁸ The National Coalition for Immigrant Women's Rights, "Quick Facts about Women and Immigration," www.wordpress.com/media-center/quick-facts-women-immigration/ (accessed September 20, 2012).

I would like to work with the immigrant women in a support model program for six months, and hopefully the group will be able to stand on its own two feet without the church's financial support. The teaching about faith and prayer will be an important part for this ministry. I have also given some thought about the members of this group who will donate 1 or 2 dollars for tea, coffee and cookies for the weekly meetings and a contribution of \$10 for those who can afford it for any pertinent material for this project.

A legal fundraising group named "Pioneers" who raised funds for causes such as: missionary groups in Haiti and other worthy causes that deserve attention is considering the project as a worthy cause and will possibly help us raise funds. Some of the site team members are also considering donating money for the project as well.

The target group for this challenge is the just arrived Haitian immigrant women as well as the Haitian professional women in the Diaspora. Both groups and Bethel Church have an interest in this project. For implementation, I would like to see a board of 4 to 6 professional Haitian women from the diaspora including pastors and evangelists. They would actively train the women by encouraging them to tell their narrative story, to engage them in the bible, as well as counsel and strengthen them with the word of God. I would also suggest the board meet with the immigrants once every week if possible and as needed in an emergency. The focus of the group is centered on hope, workshop strategies, leadership skills, techniques, support, and conferences. The just arrived immigrant women will be assigned to a member of the board for the entire six months as a 'SISTER KEEPER' who will be a source of encouragement, a prayer partner, a good listener, teacher, strategist, and problem solver. The mentor will always assign to the mentee an appropriate verse in the bible for memorization and a word of encouragement

and hope. In light of that, the team will address the lack of a support network by creating a readily accessible reference guide in the form of a pamphlet with pertinent information from the community: places to go for job training, health information, social services, education.

One potential problem that I foresee is the difficulty coordinating time for the sessions, meetings, conferences, focus group and wrap-up sessions. I intend to reach the community using flyers and word of mouth. Ultimately, the goal is to find committed professional women in the Diaspora willing to help the new immigrants on how to increase self-disclosure and to take on the task of teaching and meeting these women to help them decrease anxiety and tension in order to talk about their stories and their struggles.

Similarly, another potential conflict could be getting a commitment from the participants to meet weekly for six months. By committing to participate in the 'sister keeper' project, I will be asking the women to engage new immigrant women in non-threatening interactions in order to build trust; find their strengths and identify them; accept the testimonial sessions; and give back to their community in need.

More Challenges to be addressed such as: creating a safe place for everyone and a trustworthy atmosphere with mutual respect and to be accountable to one another. Last but not least, there is also a financial concern, in case no one wants to donate money for the training materials, literature, posters, refreshment, training videos and other visual displays, pastors training resources, and media.

One of the major challenges I will address is the house rules because this is where groups really begin by creating a safe place for everyone and a trustworthy environment

with mutual respect and accountability to one another. These women need to reclaim their story for some and for others to remember their story in a non- threatening atmosphere.

The site team members will also be part of the answers for the project. Each member will be assigned an immigrant woman in need and be part of the empowerment process. Every new endeavor has the ability to create at first a systemic imbalance; the same way every change at first hands creates resistance on all who are part of the changing process. However, I believe the good seed will prevail with prayer; good planning and teaching and it will be one joint action with a common goal.

CHAPTER 3 PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and Strategies

Goal- 1 Build awareness in immigrant women about the importance of their values and personal experiences.

Strategy 1: Identify and talk about personal experiences/special events

Strategy 2: Create a safe space

Strategy 3: Discussion, reflection, reinforcement, pre-survey (written, media)

Evaluation of Goal 1: do the women accept their values and narrative story?

Goal -2 Help the women appreciate their cultural heritage.

Strategy 1: Teach Bible stories

Strategy 2: Workshop with other women of faith

Strategy 3: Conferences/focus group about their cultural heritage

Evaluation of Goal 2: How do the women relate to each other and appreciate their cultural heritage. How do they make use of their cultural traditions, folklore in their personal and professional life.

Goal-3 To acquire skills, techniques that promote strength and support

Strategy 1: Increase verbalization skills and promote self-disclosure through storytelling

Strategy 2: Increase socialization and communication skills

Strategy 3: Identify resources that promote and encourage with tangible benefits for example: visual aid, and reduce tension and anxiety Post-survey (written, Media)

Evaluation of Goal 3: To find strength among members and identify empowerment stories.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question #1 Sociological

What practices, techniques, behaviors would help the women experience remember, nurture, and become empowered with hope?

The language barrier becomes the epitome of all the social challenges facing the Haitian immigrant—financial deprivation, isolation, loneliness, inability to negotiate the system, insecurity, lack of acceptance and inability to adapt to the American way of life. The Immigrants for the most part are fearful about not being accepted by the American people, as well as their Haitian counterparts already living in the diaspora. They do not know how to fit in the new society. They experience double standards.

Some experts argue that the socially oppressed experience difficulties finding federal funding for the issues they face; and at the same time, researchers into these issues also have difficulties getting approval for funding their lengthy research proposals. Furthermore, these experts determine the merits of the propose research by either choosing to score or not to score it. A not scored proposal was dead and the researcher was being advised that funding was not an option. It is so difficult to find the funding that one of the researcher said “she was engaged in a ‘dance of the Macabre’ with Federal Funding agencies”¹⁹ At times, the social disconnect suffered by the immigrant is so intense that it can become a “psychopathological syndrome” which is characterized by

¹⁹ The National Coalition for Immigrant Women’s Rights, ix-x.

the loss of identity, a feeling of unreality and depersonalization about one's own behavior.²⁰

Question #2: Historical/Cultural

How does cultural disassociation influence immigrant women's sense of belonging?

According to Richard Niebuhr:

Culture in all its forms and varieties is concerned with the temporal and material realization of values. Although it does not mean that the good that human efforts seeks to realize are necessarily temporal or material, however much the concern for these, is part of all the cultural achievement. That is, values relative to man's physical existence beyond food, drink, clothing, progeny and economic order.²¹

The new Haitian immigrants' very existence has been plunged so deep into a shadow. They have lost their voices and their folksongs; seemingly their very existence is denied creating a problem of disassociation. They become disjoined, separated, isolated from their memory, culture and imagination. The Haitian immigrant women suffer from many family challenges because of their isolation. The Haitians are used to a very close family life, social life, and religious life as well as neighborhood life in Haiti. According to Guerda Nicolas, there is a sense among members of the Haitian community that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together."²² Haitians for the most part, suffered a violent split from their country when they migrated to the US; the impact of leaving their country unyoked their psychological well-being, leaving them empty of family life, neighborhood life and religious life in the U.S.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 36.

²² Guerda Nicolas et al., *Social Networks and the Mental Health of Haitian Immigrants* (Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, 2011), 73.

At the same time they became dissociated from their voices. Losing their identity and their folk's songs they became disassociated culturally as they lost their autonomy and authority as a group. They need to reclaim their voices.

Question #3: Biblical

How can biblical stories help shape the positive view of the immigrant Haitian women's condition?

The unique challenges facing the new Haitian immigrant women and the segregation they suffer between them and the Haitian women in the Diaspora makes this project all the more special as an outreach program in the Haitian community. This program will reach out to young Haitian immigrant women and instill and cultivate hope in them through the word of God. It will teach them biblical principles, coaching, remembering their personal experiences and promoting support, strength and encouragement.

Some other problems the Haitian immigrant women are facing in the community is an identity crisis, despair, loss of hope and lack of interest in their own narrative story. They have forgotten who they are and some stopped completely recalling their stories, values and where they come from. They become collectively paralyzed with helplessness. Part of the solution to their problem can be a 'Sister Keeper' just as in Ruth and Naomi's friendship, which is one of the oldest testimonies in the Old Testament to female bonding. When women bond together, there will always be a flow of ideas; empowerment, encouragement, hope and one will support the other as they create a bigger story.

According to Renita J. Weems, the relationship between Ruth and Naomi's story typifies the special bond that can often develop between women despite differences in age, nationality and religion. Their friendship survived the test of time despite the odds against women as individuals, as friends, as women living alone without family and spouse²³

Ruth was a Moabite and went on living in a foreign land with her mother-in-law Naomi according to Ruth 1: 11-16 (NIV) "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me?" I am too old. Ruth replied

Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there and I will be buried.

Ruth was ready to create a new song in a new country because she was not alone, she has a support system, she has a sister, a mother, a friend, a hope; she understood her narrative story and was ready to move on. Ruth has her 'voice' although she was a foreigner in a strange land, but she was not completely isolated, because she had a support system (Naomi). She was also ready to experience God in a new meaningful way, letting go of the old and embracing the 'new' without forgetting where she comes from.

The immigrant women will understand their community, as they have placed themselves in a position to understand their covenant with each other and with God. For instance, the women will be encouraged to remember their story and engage as a community in the reality of God's promises and protection, biding with love and hope. This story is certainly emphasizes the gift of friendship and different seasons of life. The

²³ Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away* (Philadelphia: Innisfree Press, 1988) 25.

story is also a story about hope and restoration because God always remembers his promises and his grace for the afflicted, the foreigner and the forgotten.

The expected outcome for this project is that to “be restored in the bond of love and hope” the immigrant will reclaim their voices through their own narrative story and bible engagement and will learn how to be a “sister keeper.” The Haitian women from the Diaspora will help the immigrant women to be restored as they remember their own narrative story in a safe and supportive environment.

CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION PROCESS

Method of evaluation 1

In March 2013, I will do a pilot testing in order to produce the survey based on a sample and design of Arlene Fink.²⁴ Thereafter, the immigrant women will be interviewed about their experiences telling their stories for Goal 1. I will administer the interview and the questionnaires. In Strategy 1 immigrant women will be interviewed through a series of questions that will be administered either by phone or in person. All data will remain in the questionnaire and will be saved for further analysis, the evaluation of the program.

Strategy 1:2 a safe place will be established and reinforced by building a list of ground rules on posters and placed on the wall in order to create a trusting environment for everyone. Women will be encouraged to talk about their stories, their pain, their problems and the facilitators as well will also be encouraged to talk about their stories. A benchmark will be in place to keep everything in perspective.

Strategy 1:3 by April 2013 the immigrant women will be in serious dialogue with each other. The storytellers from the diaspora will reflect on their own narrative stories, have one-on-one interactions with the immigrant, while the staff/Media will observe interaction among everyone for further evaluation.

²⁴ Arlene Fink, *How to Conduct Surveys* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, 2009), 4.

Method of evaluation 2

By May 2013, we will help the women appreciate their cultural heritage. Goal 2.Strategy 2:1 a series of spiritual coordination will take place such as: engaging the people through reading of the scriptures, prayer, listening to the Holy Spirit, teaching about hope and the promises of God and observing for further evaluation. Strategy 2:2 a series of conferences and workshops will be held with other women of faith; they will listen to the concerns of every individual in order to give them hope.

The needs of the people will be identified as they are connected with each other through prayer and action of love. The women will be encouraged to meditate on the scriptures and to create cell groups of prayer. Last but not least, they will be asked to memorize a verse that identifies their needs, concerns and gives meaning and hope to their concerns.

Strategy 2:3 by June & July a series of focus groups will take place, pamphlets about hope will be distributed; listening to each individual to learn more about their concerns, any progress they made, encourage them to take lead, hear each person ideas and concern, encourage the Media to record some of the interaction with the focus group and encourage the group to take part in the Sunday services for another backup system.

Method of evaluation 3

By August, 2013,Goal 3 to acquire skills and techniques that promote strength and support Strategy 3:1 a series of skills and techniques that will promote strength and support will be assigned and teach the women in order to build on in their community and help them organize themselves. They will talk about their stories with hope for the future and the media will be encouraged to keep record for further evaluation.

Strategy 3:2 the mentee will acquire some skills through mentorship, mentoring and workshop. They will be able to identify issues within the community that should be addressed; create strategies and action plans for change; identify seeds that can help each other engage the Spirit for hope; listen to others, bonding more with the community; use a faith-based approach to resolve conflict; talk about strategies for transformation; become a good listener; create respect for all; and understand that solutions can be multifaceted.

Strategy 3:3 by September 2013 all the resources to help and encourage will be identified such as: posters, training video, movies, exercises, dining out, books, pamphlets, prayer, bible study, discussion and other visual displays.

The site team will know the goal has been achieved when, upon comparing surveys and interviews with the women, a change in attitude is noted—a greater willingness to give information and accept it from others. Also to be noted will be a change in the relationship between the women, and the lowering of any previous social barriers. To have a willingness to pray, to teach and to forsake the “social segregation mentality behind” and last but not least, for some to claim back their voices, while others will remember their stories.

Change is possible within 6 to 8 months if the women can achieve one of the basic ways types of Action.

- 1- Instrumental
- 2- Expressive
- 3- Moral ²⁵

²⁵ Joseph V. Crockett “Mentor and Research Development,” (handout, New York Theological Seminary, March 19-23, 2012).

The criterion for the evaluation would be to observe half of the participants being able to regain hope using their own voices and willingness to break the social segregation barrier as well as access all the resources at hands once they find their voices.

CHAPTER 6

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

The Process

In October 2012, the members of the site team and I had decided to meet at the site location that evening in order to complete the competency assessment forms. It was a joint effort and a time-consuming process however. The team members were very encouraging and sat down for more than two hours to complete the competency assessment forms. A summary of the site team's assessment of ministerial competencies and mine follows:

Theologian

Candidate demonstrates her competency and ability to relate the Word in a theologically sound manner locally and in a much broader context. She also takes time to expound on the word theologically and brings it alive through her life experiences and life styles.

Preacher

Candidate has the ability to organize material effectively to assist others in better understanding the subject matter; she is capable in using appropriate language in delivering the message so that it caters to the people's understanding. She is also able to interpret the sacred scriptures, the symbols and parables in a meaningful and effective manner.

Worship Leader

The candidate is able to create and lead rituals and various forms of worship for any specific occasion or situation with leadership skill and professionalism. She also has

the capability to liven up the ceremony in order for the Congregation to become an active participant in the worship.

Prophetic agent

The candidate is always ready to give open-minded advice to those who need it and has a willingness to embrace risk in order to create social change, and she has a heart for injustice toward women's violence.

Leader

The candidate can benefit in improving her leadership skills. However she does possess the ability to motivate others to achieve their best efforts. Some attention is needed.

Religious Educator

The candidate has the ability to employ sound teaching methods appropriate to the community. She is very open and has the ability to prepare and communicate the subject matter in a clear hermeneutical fashion; she is able to rightly divide the text through exegesis.

Counselor

The candidate can work on improving her counseling skills. She is very motivated in helping others and works through their difficulties and crisis. She is also a good communicator.

Pastor

The candidate excels in the ability to comfort and encourages those who are bereaved. She cherishes and encourages others with words of wisdom and genuine concerns. The candidate is a source of comfort.

Spiritual Leader

The candidate has proven to be an effective spiritual guide to those in their ongoing relationship to God. She has reached on a daily bases to thousands via words of encouragement and writings. The candidate excels her attentiveness to the spiritual journey through the on-going relationship with God.

Witness or Evangelist

The candidate is highly competent to communicate effectively inside and outside one's immediate community. She always seeks to ensure the future of the faith community and the integrity of her message.

Administrator

The candidate can benefit in improving her administrative skills, however, she is a good organizer and effective in the ability to involve other persons in decision making

Professional

The candidate demonstrates a positive professional attitude towards self and others. She demonstrates good listener skills and good communicator.

Competencies Chosen for Development

I. **LEADERSHIP:** to delegate responsibilities and to learn how to appreciate all work without being biased or judgmental.

Strategies:

- A. I will create workshop strategies about leadership skills with the team
- B. Read books pertaining to leadership
- C. Serving as a liaison between the group, the community and the church
- D. In service training about leadership

EVALUATION:

To enable others and guiding them to accomplish their endeavor in a timely fashion.

I. **COUNSELOR:** to always accept the counselee without bias, and to aid in spiritual healing even in difficult moral circumstances.

Strategies:

- A. Each member to introduce self to each other and talk about their experiences in order to reduce stress and anxiety.
- B. House rules created where everybody can come up with a rule for safe environment to give opportunity for the members to have self-disclosure.
- C. Monitoring how well the group members are remembering by asking them to repeat back
- D. Establish groups relationship by using role-plays

EVALUATION:

- A) Request a written evaluation from the team after individual group session.

II. **ADMINISTRATIVE:** To organize effectively and to establish realistic goals

Strategies:

- A. Assigning tasks, taking notes, discussing, homework assignment to increase learning
- B. Effective service delivery; make sure the group really understand the information before going to the next step.
- C. Ensured goals met timely by breaking down every step into smaller steps that can be reinforced
- D. Ability to oversee site teams by being explicit and use concrete example.

EVALUATION:

Involved team in the decision making process and to keep me accountable for the timeline, in order to meet my deadline in a timely manner.

APPENDIX 1: TIMELINE

Date	Task/ Activity	Tools/Necessary to complete	Person
		Task	Responsible
2/2013	Proposal approval by Director	2 copies of proposal	G Herard
3/2013	Administer first survey/ Interview creating Safe Environment	Immigrant Women/ Posters /Set of Rules / Survey Questions	Site Teams / M Herold
4/2014	Meet with Advisor/Workshops	Copies of Proposal/site team members/Women from the Diaspora/ Immigrant Women/Media to document	G Herard/ Members of Site Teams/ Media
5/2013 to 6/2013	Focus group/Prayer Meetings/Bible Study /Movie Nights	Holy Spirit / Pamphlets/ Brochures/Bibles/Women of Faith /Movies/dining out / Videos/Media/	Speakers/ preachers/ site Team Members/ Volunteers/ professional women from the Diaspora
7/2013 to 8/2013	Meeting with Advisor / Fund Raising Project /Survey Questions Re Administer for comparative Data	Copies of Proposal/Media/ Sound System in place/Refreshment / Brochures/ Printed Cards/Story Tellers/Volunteers/Videos/ Speakers/ Interviewers	Site Team/ Fund Raising Group/Media/ Volunteer/ Pastor

APPENDIX 2: BUDGET

Date	Task/Activity	Tool/Necessary to Complete task	Person Responsible	Budgetary considered cost
2/2013				
3/2013 To 4/2013	Goal 1 Strategy 1-2-3 Administer Survey/ Interviewing /posters / Media	Surveys Questions/ Set of Rules printed posters to create safe environment/secure location / telephone /papers / pens/ pencils	Site team members/G Herard/ Media person	\$1000
5/ 2013 to 6/2013	Goal 2 Strategy 1-2-3	Pamphlets, brochures, bibles, videos, women of faith, refreshment, meetings	Pastor, volunteer, Media, women of faith, G Herard, site team	\$600
7/ 2013 to 8/ 2013	Goal 3 Strategy 1-2-3 Meeting with Advisor, Fund raising project, Re- Administer survey question for the evaluation of program	Copies of Proposal, sound system, printed card, story tellers, immigrant women, Media, survey	Site team, Fund raising Team, volunteer, pastors, story tellers, Media, sound engineering,	\$1000

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APPENDIX B RESOURCES

General Networking information

1. **Moun Nouyok pran Swen Ko- Nou...**Rele 311 oubyen vizite www.nyc.gov/health
2. **Pou ou Chwazi Yon Gadri Nan Nouyok...**Rele 311
3. **Safe Haven, Safe Baby, Safe Place...**Help line 1-877-796-HOPE
4. **Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy** (Free Program for Youth ages 8-21) Tel 1-718-856-1123. www.ifetayofamily.org
5. **Breast –Feeding Program in Kings County Hospital Center...**Ask for Marie Garcon RN, CCE, CBC. Telephone. 1-718-245-4743.
6. **Free Immigration Services, New York Citi Council Member:** Mathiew Eugene District Office. 123 Linden Boulevard Brooklyn, New York 11226. Telephone 1-718-287-8762” Free Help “
7. **Free Summer Meals for All Children.** Call 311 or Text “NYC Meals” To 877-877
8. **Deciding what to do if you are Pregnant.** Kings County Hospital Family Planning Clinic Telephone: 1-718- 245-3502
9. **Help People With HIV (PNAP) Free.** Convenient. Safe. Helpful and Confidential. Telephone 1-800-541-AIDS and 1-212- 693- 1419
10. **Initiative for Women with Disabilities (IWD) Young Women’s Program.** Langone Medical Center Telephone 1-212- 598-6479 visits the Website www.iwdwellness.org
11. **Immigration Legal Services for Haitians (CAMBA)** Tel. 1-718-287-0857 for Hearing Impaired 800- 662-1220
12. **The New York Community Trust (NYCT)** helping Haitians Immigrants lives and Work Legally In the City. Phone 1-212- 686-0010 www.nyctcfi.org
13. **Haitian- America United for Progress INC.** Health Body-Health Mind...Piti “Piti Zwazo fe Nich” NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs. Telephone: 1-718- 527- 3776

14. **Women's Law. Org Caribbean Women's Health Association** (Spoke English, French and Creole) 1-718-215-557-2626
15. **Haitian Communities project** Advocate, Social Worker, Non Profit agencies community groups Contact Desiree Wayne (Community project Specialist) T- 1-215-557-2626
16. **HASCO Community Center (HAITIAN AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOCIAL ORGANISATIO)** Food Nutrition Program-Family Support- Mental Heath- immigration services- Senior Recreation Telephone 1-845-352-5939.
17. **Haitian Center Council-Council Member Mathieu Eugene 40th District** .123 Linden Blvd 3rd floor Brooklyn New York 11226(between Bedford and Carlton) Telephone 1-718-940-2200
18. **Pandemik Flou** Rele 311.
19. **Education GED and ESL Services for Adults and Youth**
 - a)- **Union Settlement.....** Basic Education in Spanish and English 1-212-828-6298
 - b) - **Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation ESL and GED** Tel 1-212-987-4422
 - c) - **NYC Department of Education Office of Adult and Continuing Education.** All five Boroughs <http://adultednyc.org/>
 - d) - **Lutheran Family Health Centers.** Adults and Family Education 1-718-630-7150

SITE TEAM MEMBERS INFORMATION

BETHEL CHRISTIAN CHURCH1-347-627-7263-62 ask for Evangelist
 Myrta Herold
 Myrta Herold.....Evangelist 1-718-419-4766
 Margarette Tropnas.....MSW Social Worker 1-347-523-2196
 Anna Clermont.....Public Health Educator Specialist 1-347-834-5165
 Margarette NoelSystem Analyst Specialist 1-646-753-1618
 Pastor G. Herard.....Registered Nurse and Doctorate Candidate 1-347-693-2840
 Hercule BlancVideographer Specialist

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